Greetings FFRomee

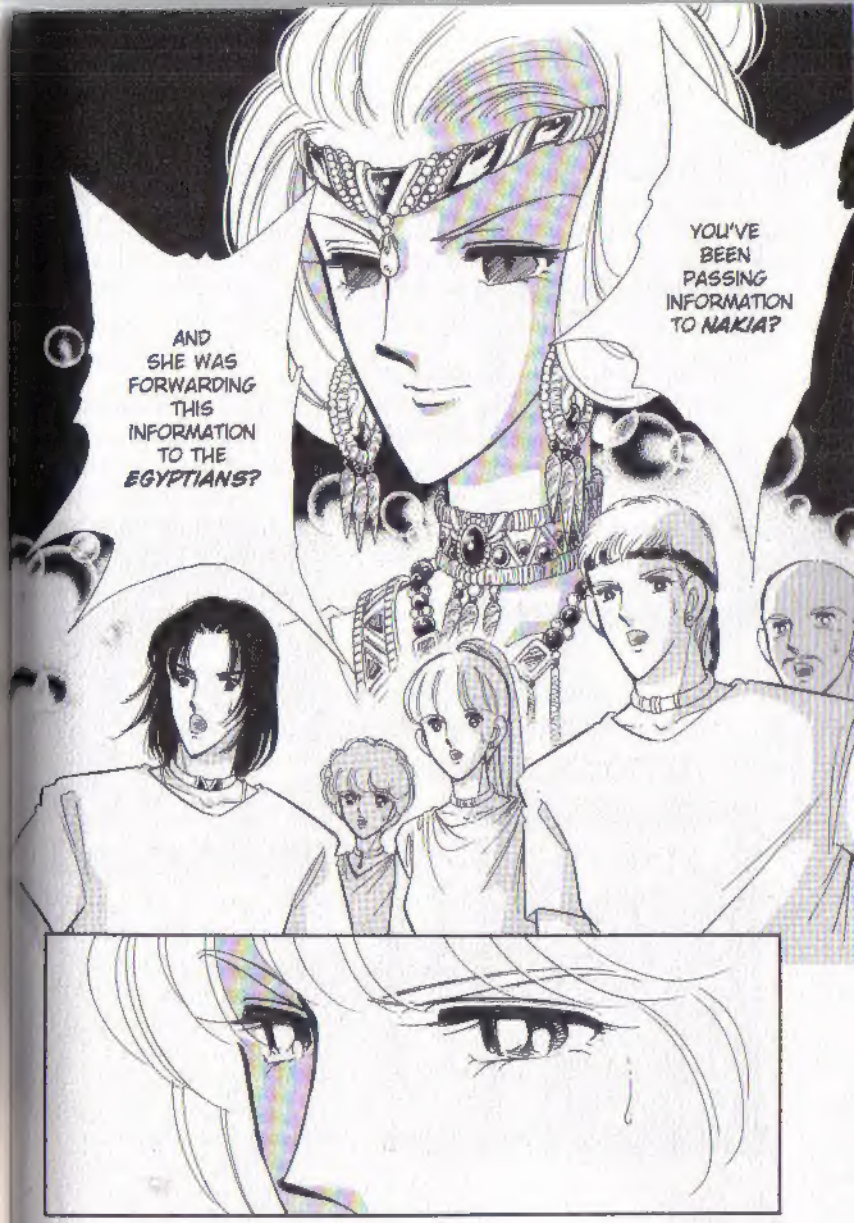
VIZ media

shôjo

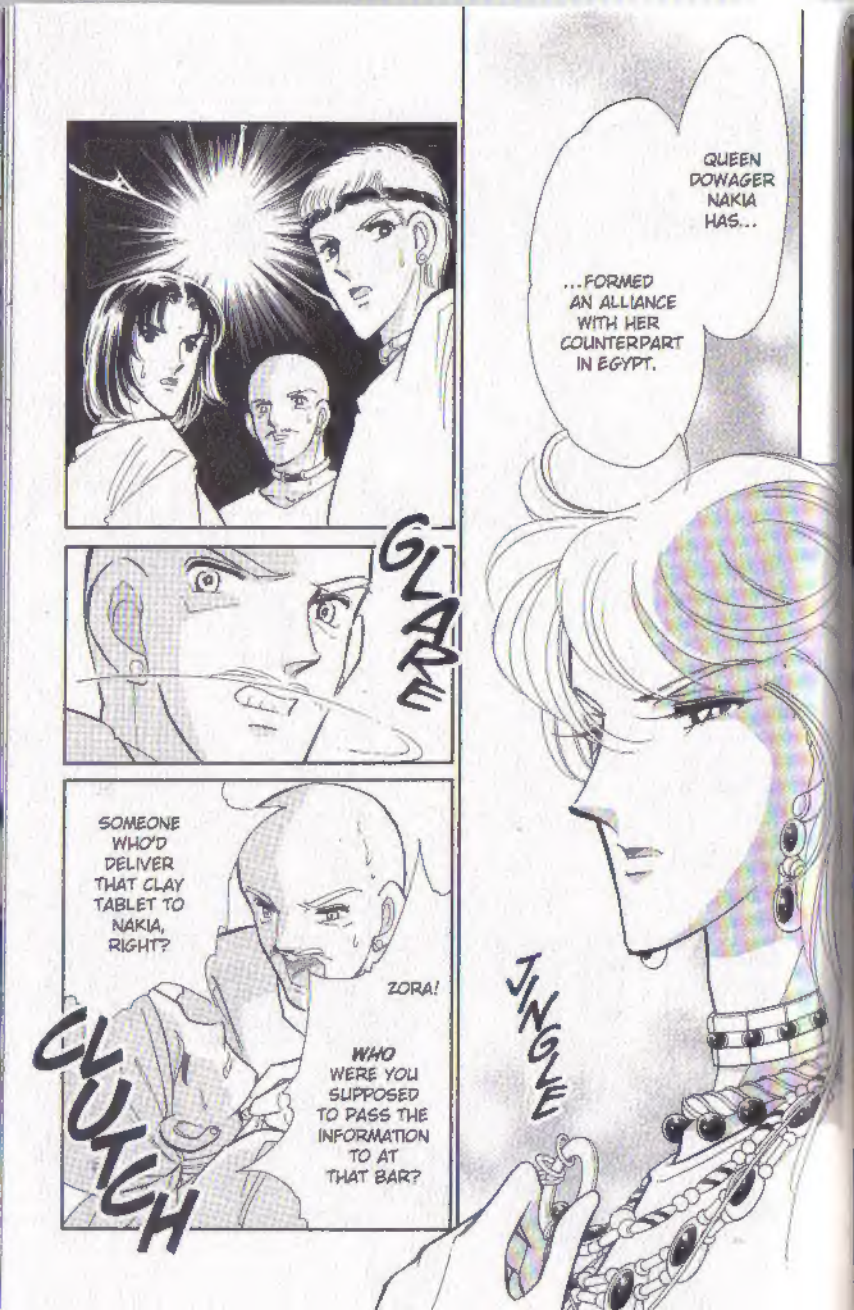
RED RIVER

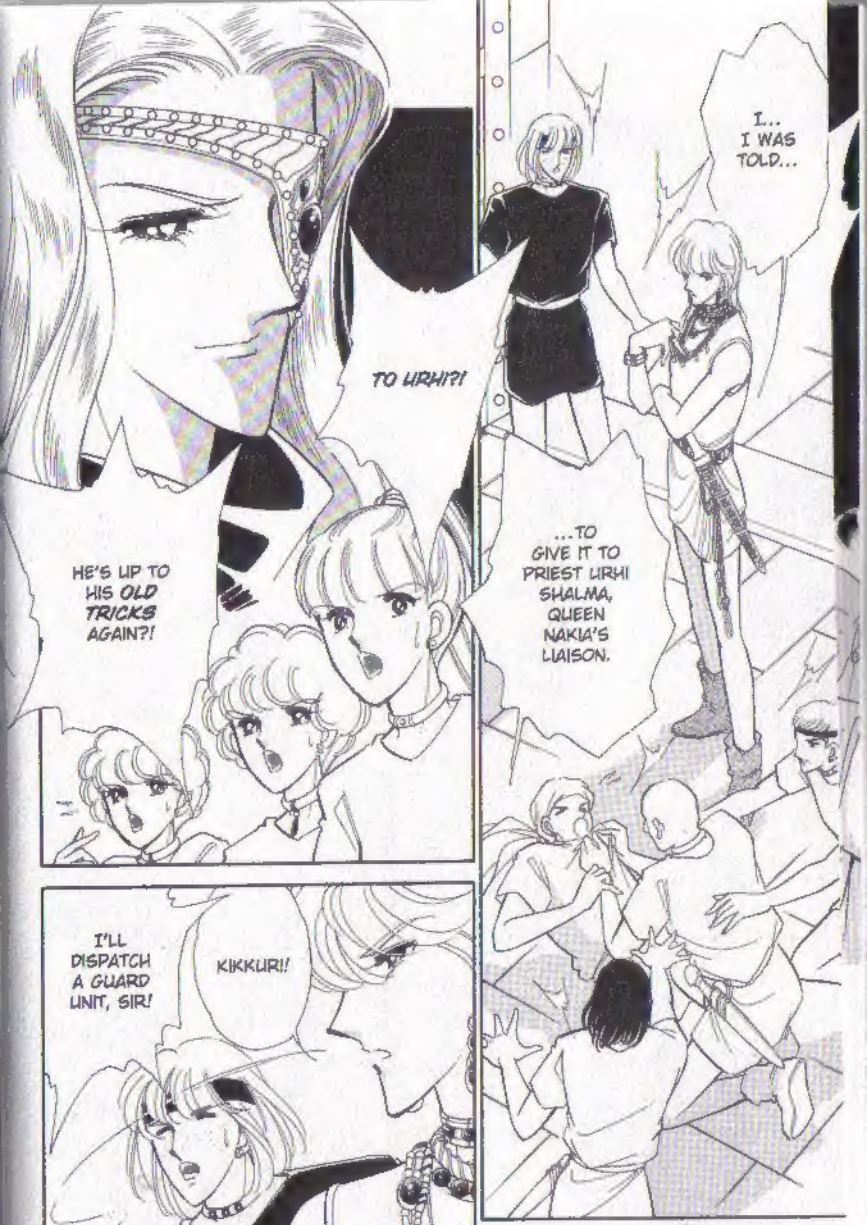
21

story and art by **Chie Shinohara**


YOU'VE BEEN PASSING INFORMATION TO *NAKIA*?
AND SHE WAS FORWARDING THIS INFORMATION TO THE *EGYPTIANS*?

dkn


QUEEN DOWAGER NAKIA HAS...
...FORMED AN ALLIANCE WITH HER COUNTERPART IN EGYPT.
JINGLE
GLARE
SOMEONE WHO'D DELIVER THAT CLAY TABLET TO NAKIA, RIGHT?
ZORA!
WHO WERE YOU SUPPOSED TO PASS THE INFORMATION TO AT THAT BAR?
CLUTCH

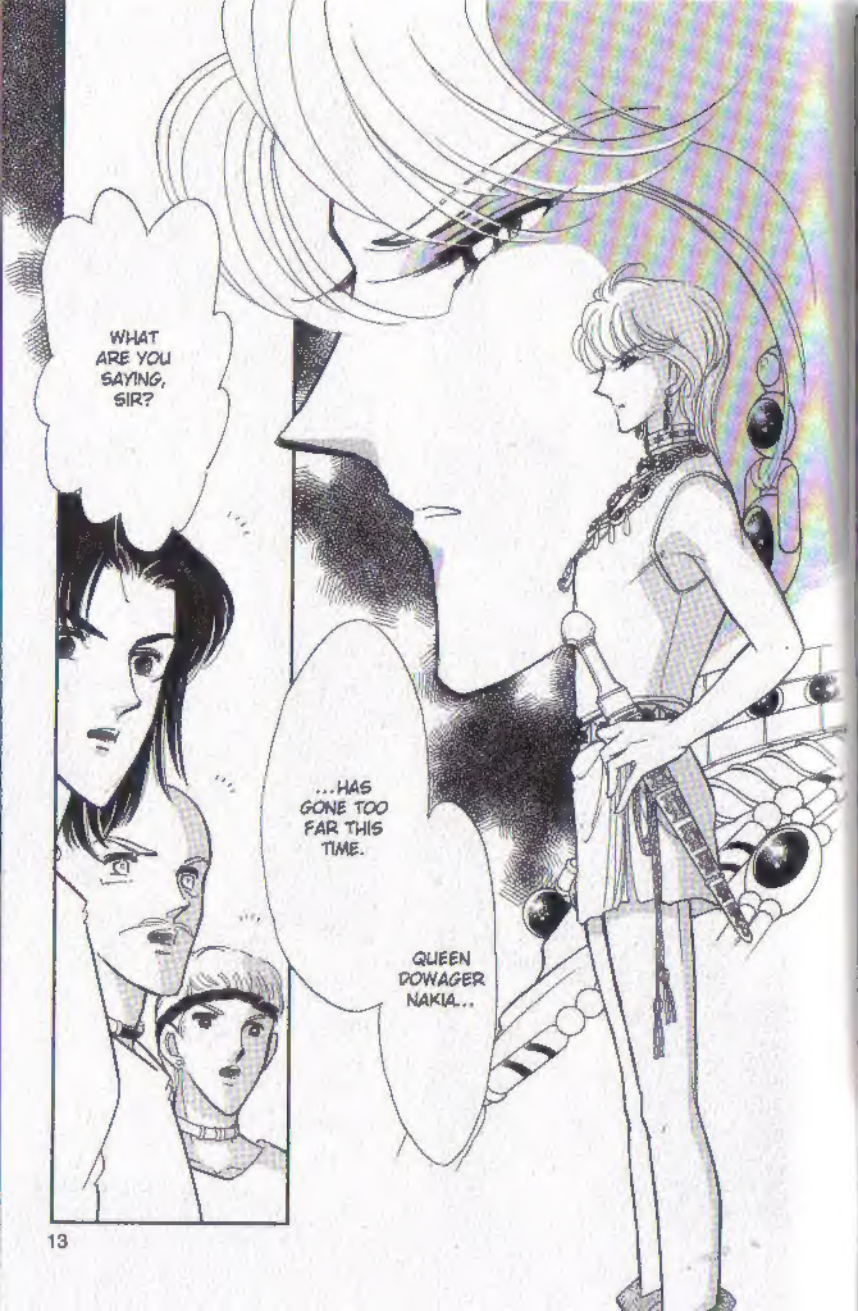

I... I WAS TOLD...
...TO GIVE IT TO PRIEST URHI SHALMA, QUEEN NAKIA'S LIAISON.
TO URHI?!
HE'S UP TO HIS OLD TRICKS AGAIN?!
KIKKURI!
I'LL DISPATCH A GUARD UNIT, SIR!

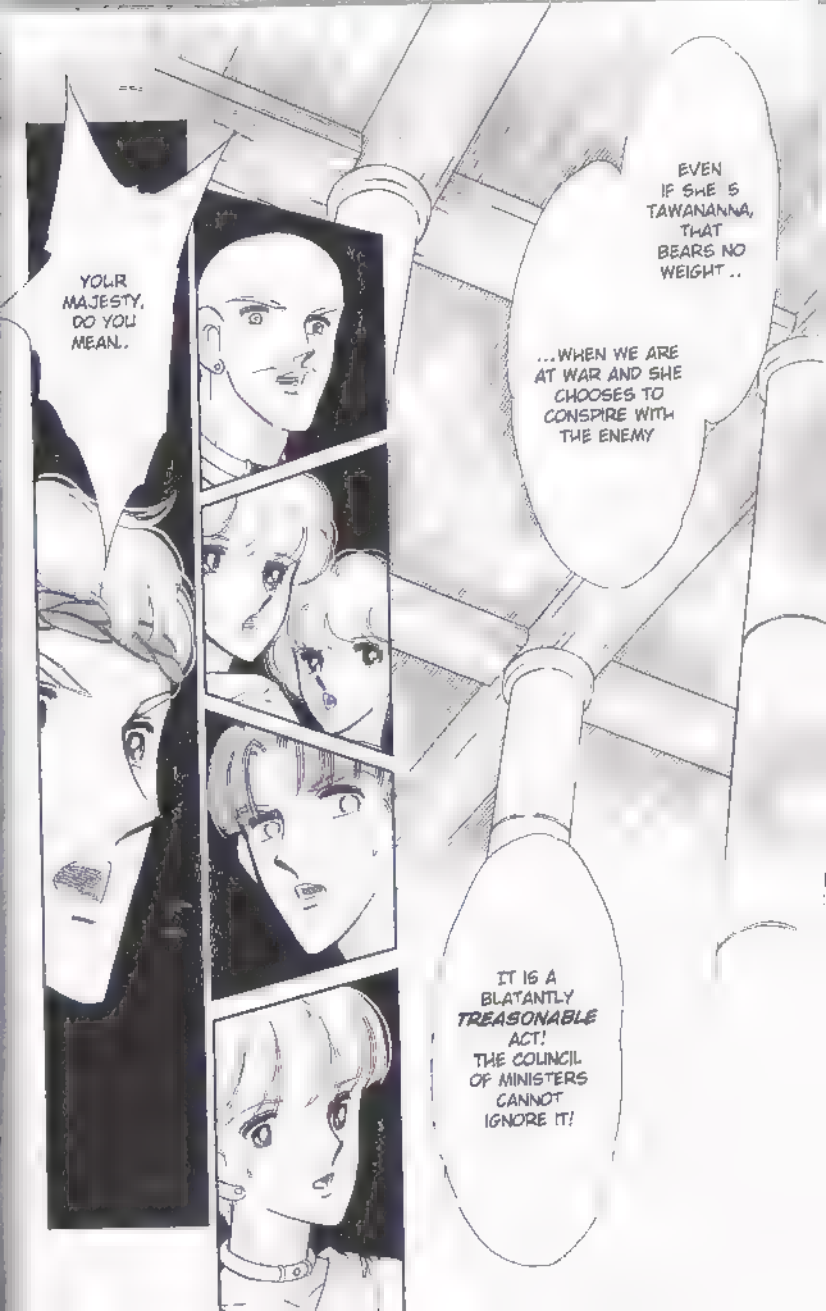
CLUTCH
I TRUSTED YOU...
...BECAUSE I THOUGHT WE WERE CLOSE FRIENDS, THAT YOU'D NEVER DIVULGE PRIVILEGED INFORMATION!
ZORA!
WHY DID YOU BECOME AN AGENT FOR QUEEN NAKIA?!
HOW COULD I BE SO WRONG?!
IN RETURN FOR HELPING HER, QUEEN NAKIA PROMISED ME A PROMOTION.
SHUBAS...
YOU AND I WERE AIDES TO COMMANDING OFFICERS. THEN YOU WERE PROMOTED AND I WASN'T.
WHY ONLY YOU, SHUBAS?!
I'M AS CAPABLE AS YOU ARE!

TREACHER-OUS DOG!
STOP IT, SHUBAS!
TAKE ZORA AWAY. I'LL DEAL WITH HIM LATER.
WHACK
I THOUGHT WE WERE FRIENDS.
I TRUSTED HIM... NEVER THOUGHT HE'D...
ZORA AND I JOINED THE ARMY AROUND THE SAME TIME.

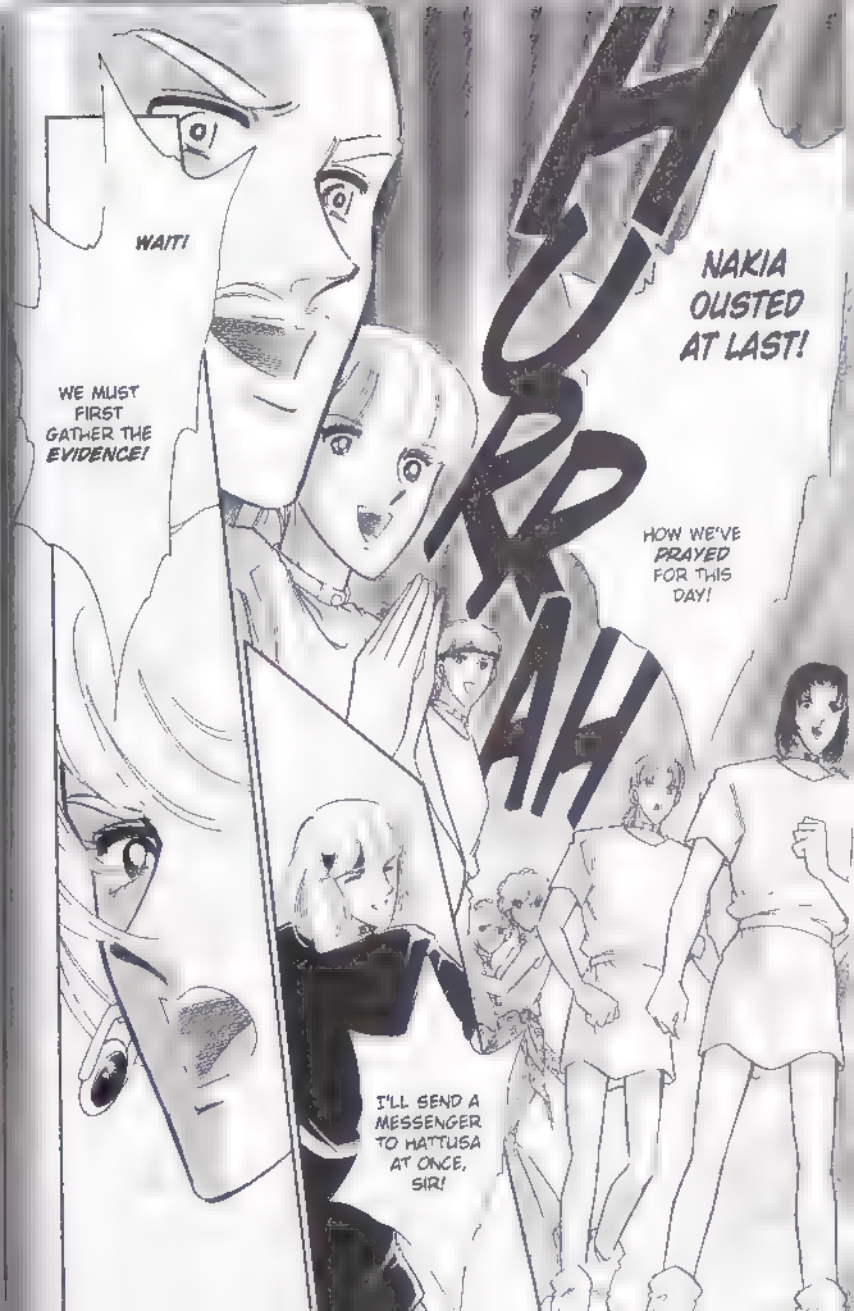
I WAS CARELESS, HEED-LESS...!
NO, SIR! I'M TO BLAME!
IT WAS MY LAPSE THAT LED TO—
SIR..
...I AM TO BLAME FOR THIS MESS.
...JUST MAKE SURE I NEVER HAVE TO REMEMBER THIS.
AS FOR PUNISH-MENT...
I WILL REQUIRE YOU TO LEARN ALL YOU CAN FROM IT.
YES, SHUBAS, YOU WERE. YOU'VE HAD A HARD AND BITTER LESSON.

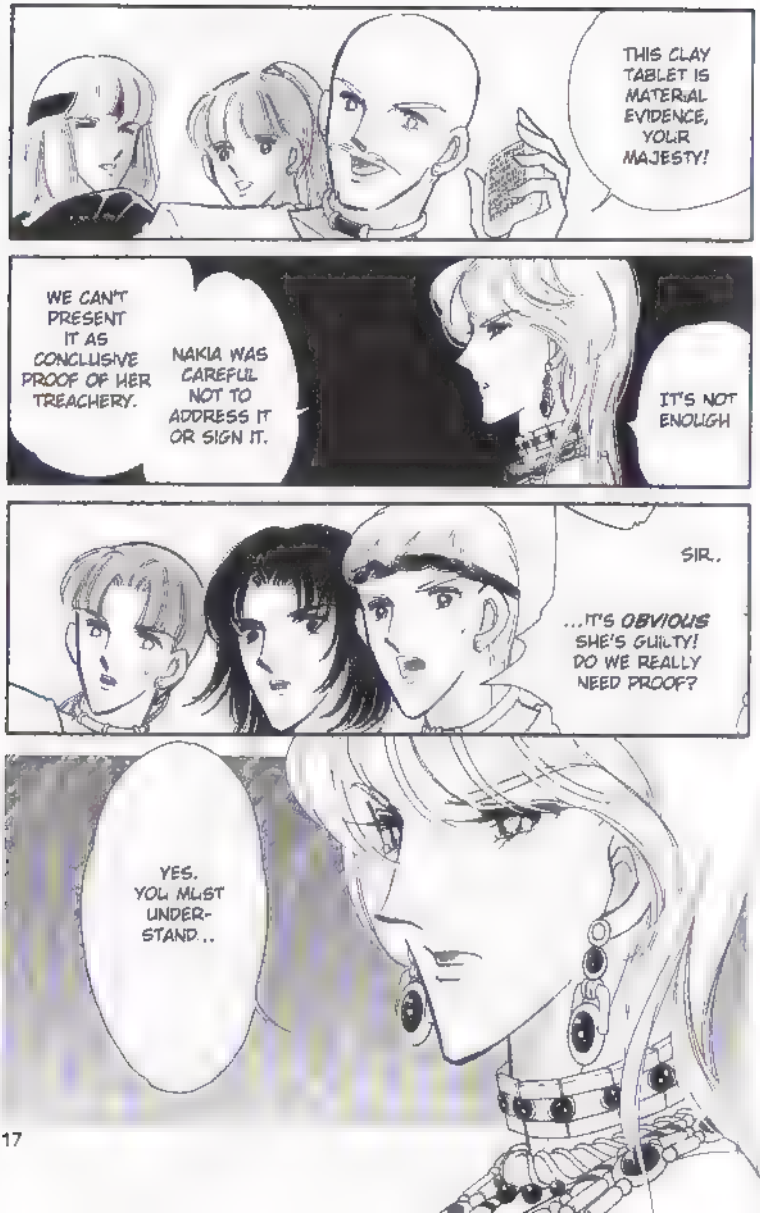
...TO RESCUE PRINCESS YURI!
YOUR MAJESTY!
WE MUST ACT NOW...
LET ME AND MY SISTERS GO, SIR!
THAT'S RIGHT, SIR!
PLEASE ALLOW ME TO RETURN TO EGYPT!
SHE'S GONE TOO FAR...
BUT QUEEN NAKIA'S BEEN PASSING INFORMATION TO EGYPT!
YOUR MAJESTY?
PRINCESS YURI IS IN GREAT DANGER!
IT ISN'T THAT SIMPLE.
QUIET, ALL OF YOU.


WHAT ARE YOU SAYING, SIR?
...HAS GONE TOO FAR THIS TIME.
QUEEN DOWAGER NAKIA...

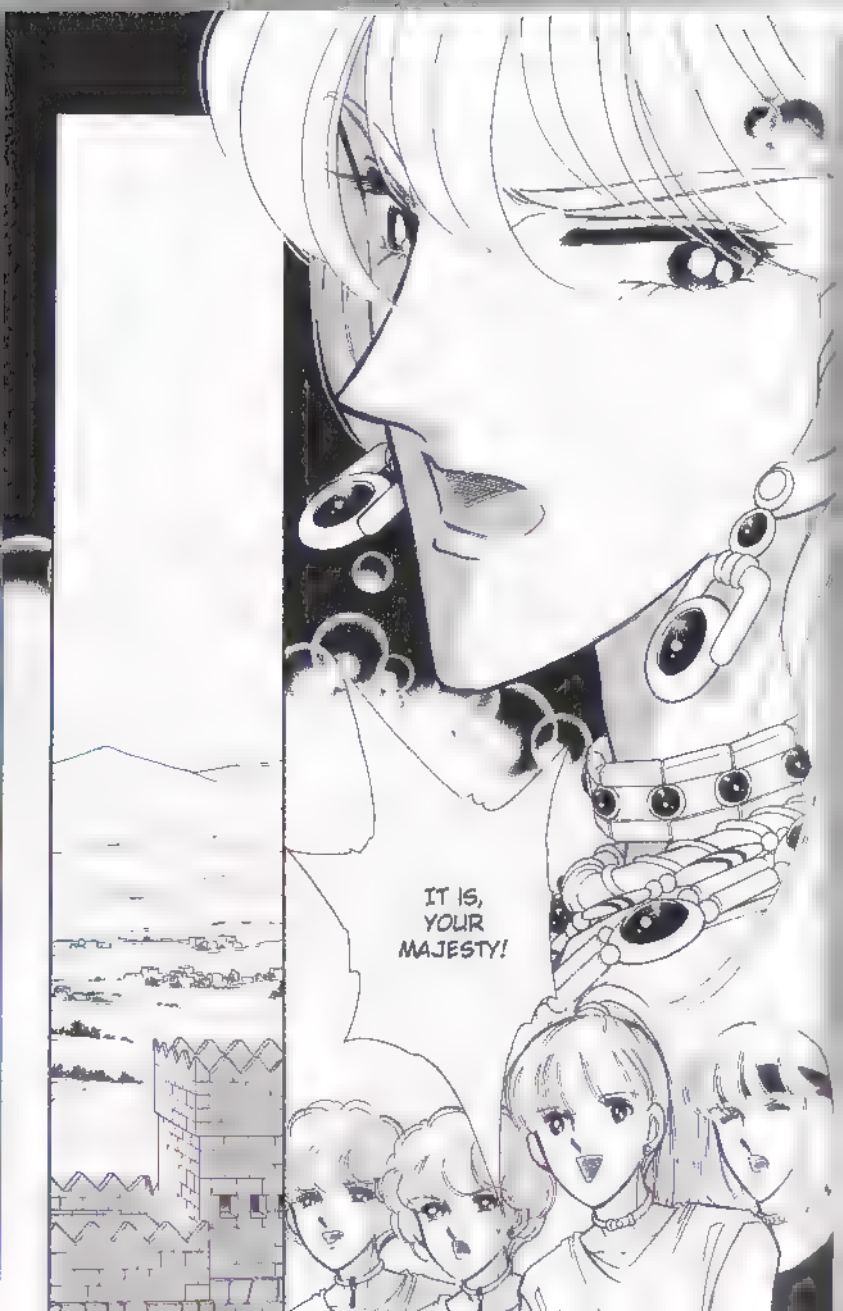

EVEN IF SHE S TAWANANNA, THAT BEARS NO WEIGHT ..
...WHEN WE ARE AT WAR AND SHE CHOOSES TO CONSPIRE WITH THE ENEMY
IT IS A BLATANTLY TREASONABLE ACT! THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS CANNOT IGNORE IT!
YOUR MAJESTY, DO YOU MEAN..

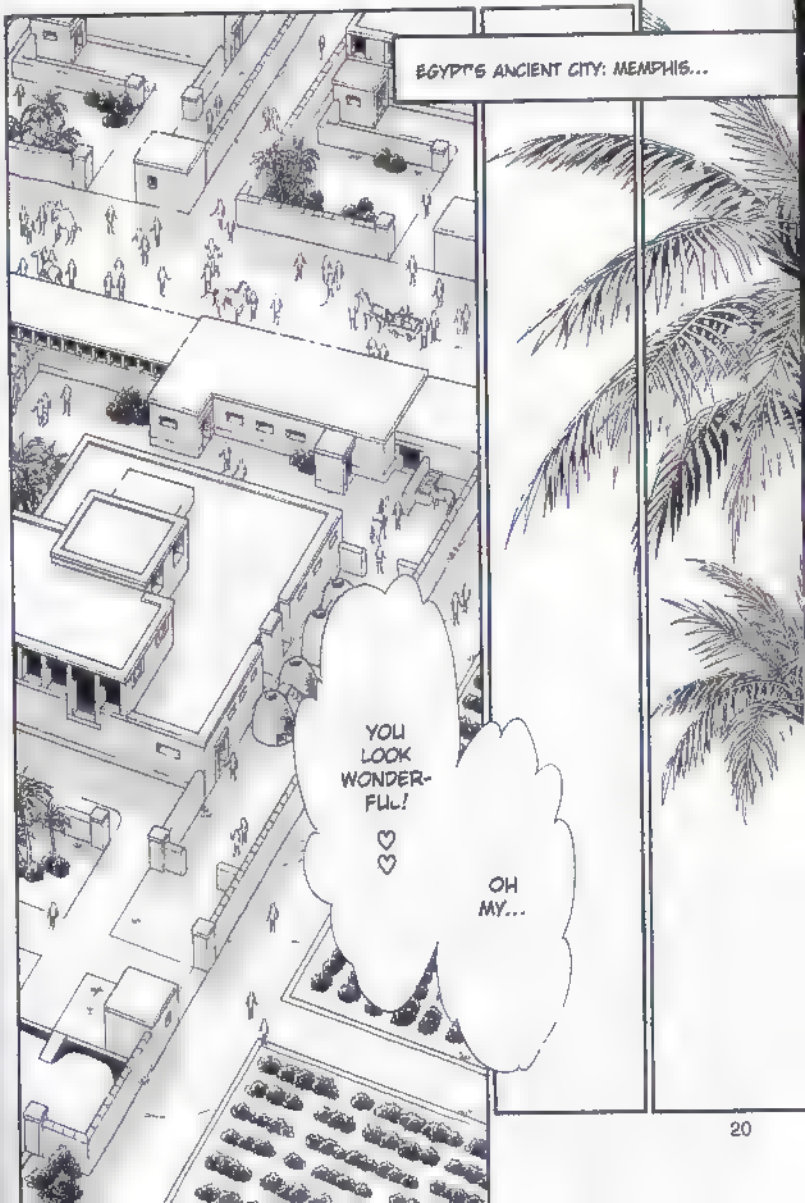
I WILL REQUEST THAT QUEEN DOWAGER NAKIA...
...BE STRIPPED OF HER TITLE AS TAWANANNA!

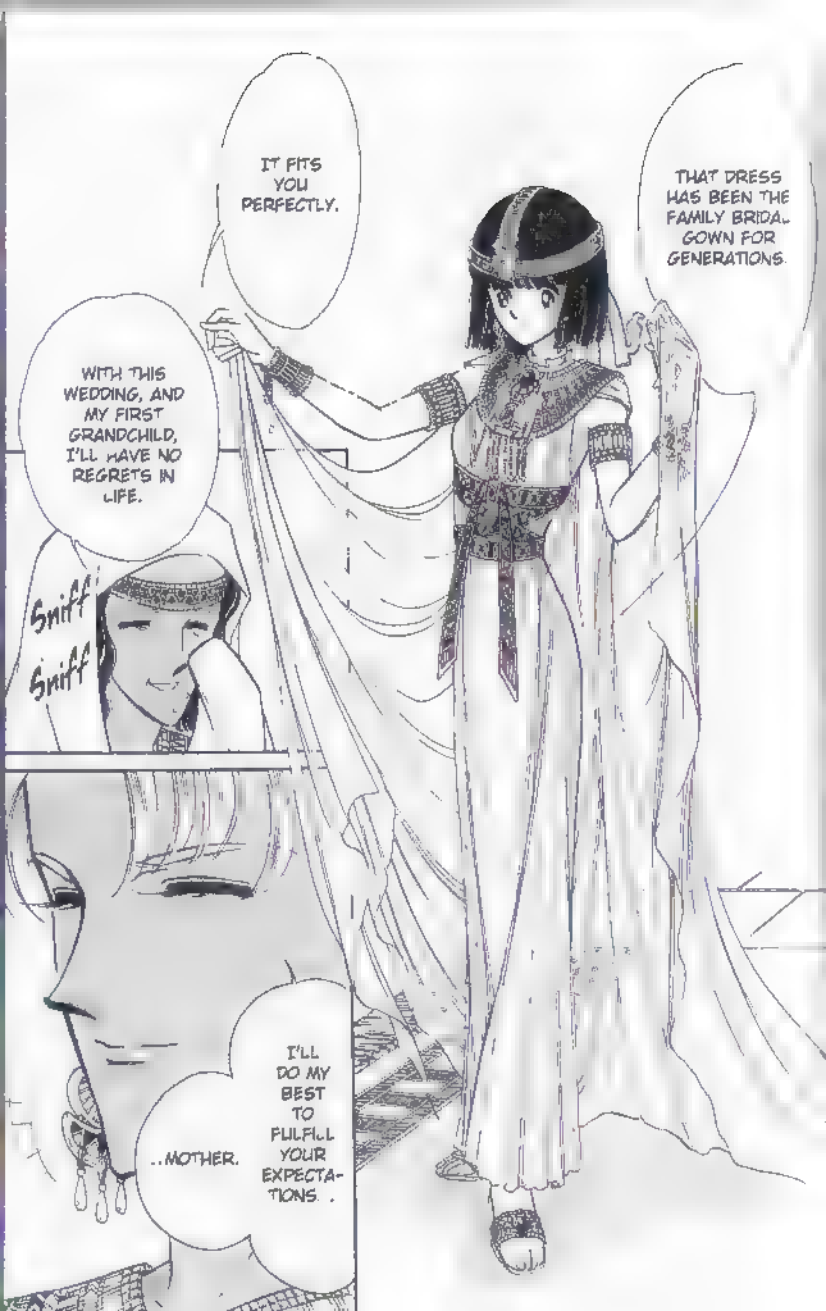

KURAH
NAKIA OUSTED AT LAST!
HOW WE'VE PRAYED FOR THIS DAY!
WAIT!
WE MUST FIRST GATHER THE EVIDENCE!
I'LL SEND A MESSENGER TO HATTUSA AT ONCE, SIR!

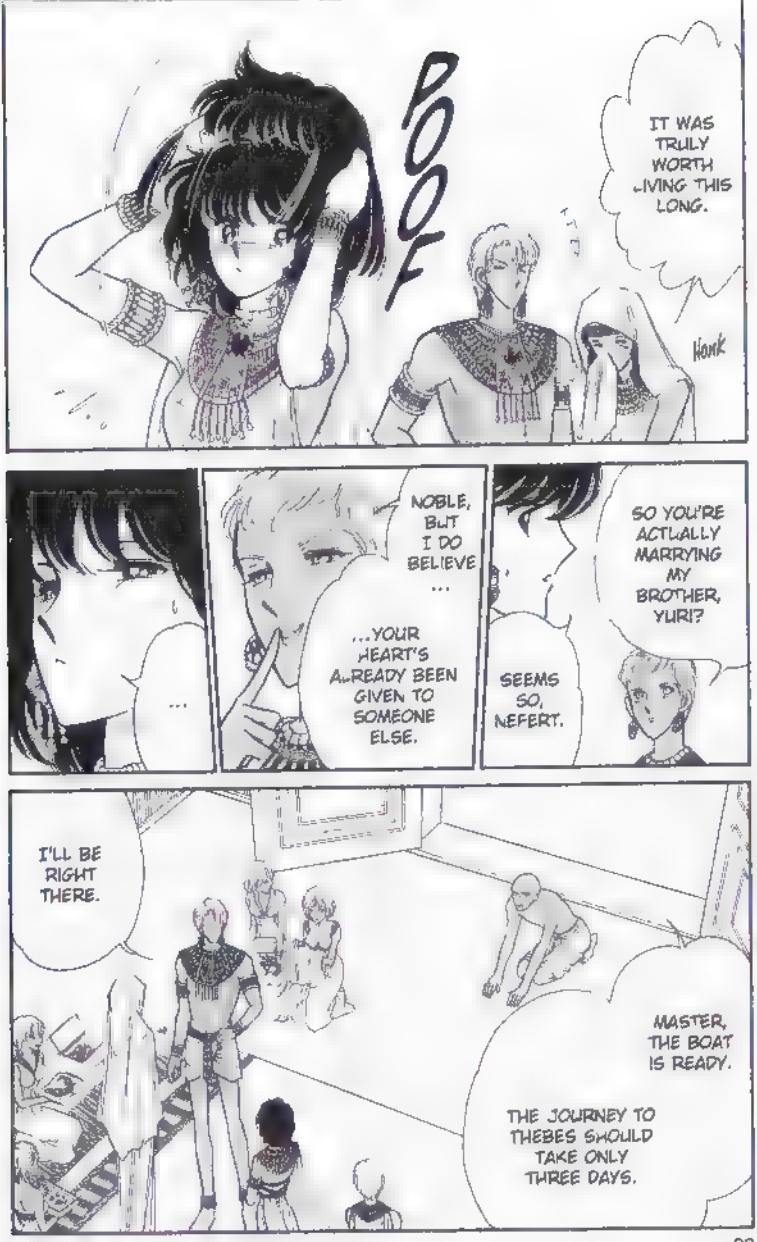

THIS CLAY TABLET IS MATERIAL EVIDENCE, YOUR MAJESTY!
WE CAN'T PRESENT IT AS CONCLUSIVE PROOF OF HER TREACHERY.
NAKIA WAS CAREFUL NOT TO ADDRESS IT OR SIGN IT.
IT'S NOT ENOUGH
SIR..
...IT'S OBVIOUS SHE'S GUILTY! DO WE REALLY NEED PROOF?
YES. YOU MUST UNDER-STAND..

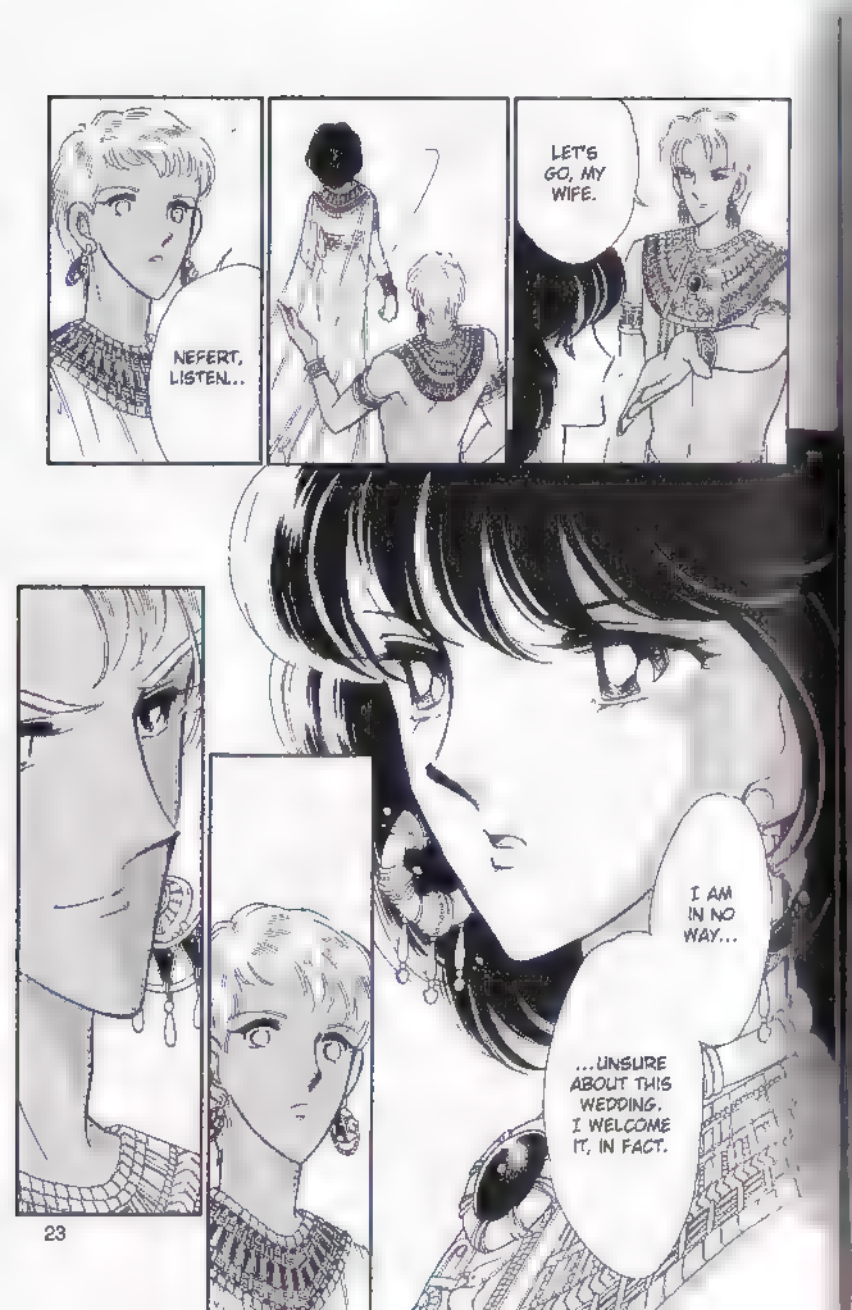
...THAT THE HITTITE EMPIRE IS NOT AN AUTOCRACY, AND I WON'T MAKE IT ONE.
I COULD DECREE NAKIA AN ENEMY OF THE STATE, BUT THAT WOULD USURP OUR POLITICAL SYSTEM. THAT'S SOMETHING I WILL NOT DO.
THEREFORE, I MUST PRESENT A CASE THAT, ON THE EVIDENCE, WILL CONVINCE THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS AND THE PEOPLE OF NAKIA'S GUILT.
THAT TABLET IS A START, BUT ONLY A START WE MUST DRAW THE PROCEDURAL NOOSE AROUND NAKIA'S NECK...
...SO TIGHT SHE CANNOT SLIP OUT! IS THAT CLEAR?

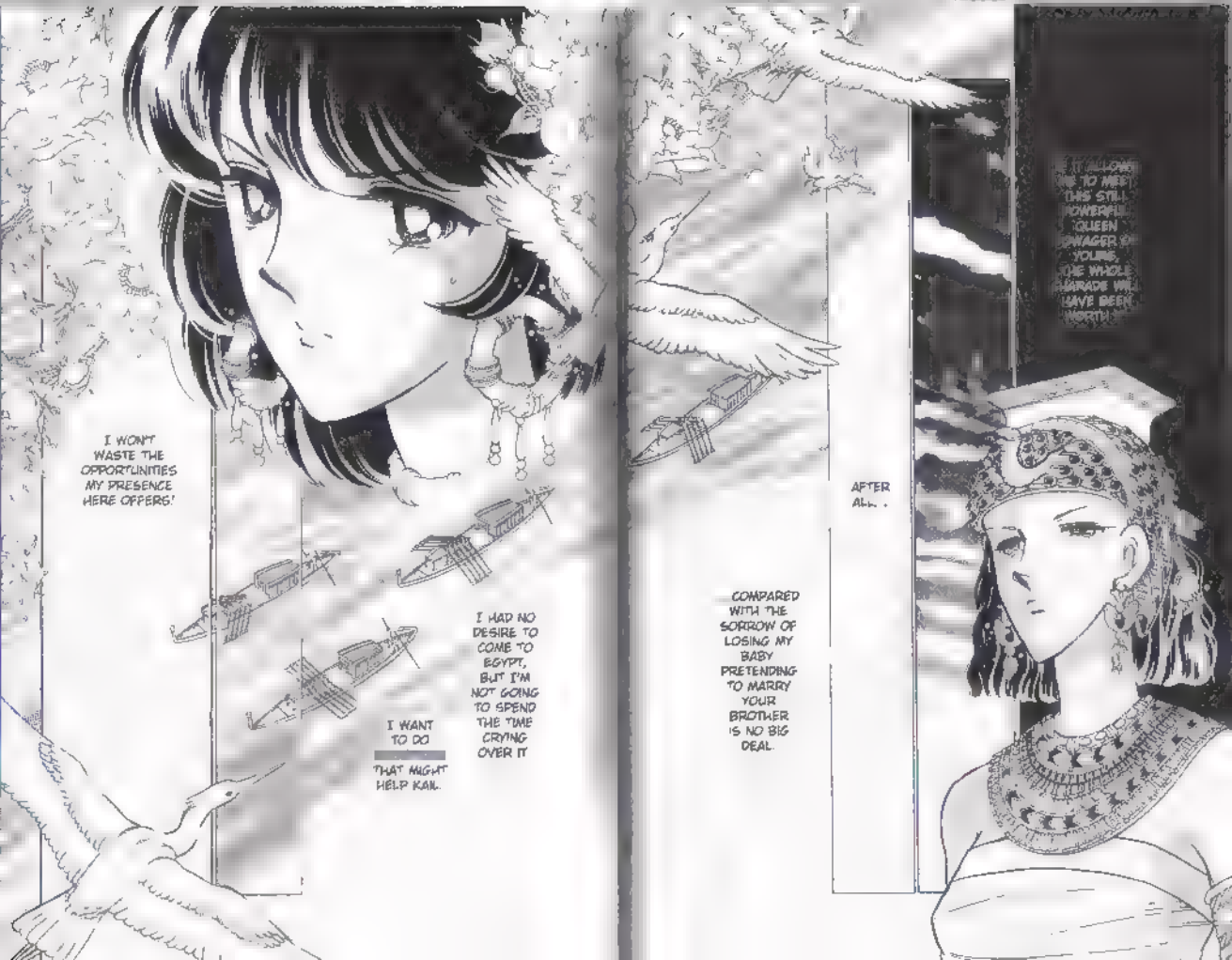

IT IS, YOUR MAJESTY!

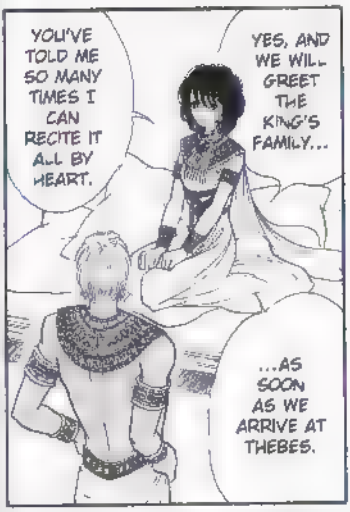

EGYPT'S ANCIENT CITY: MEMPHIS...
YOU LOOK WONDER-FUL!
OH MY...

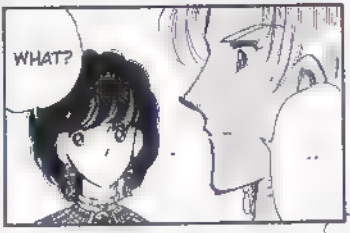

IT FITS YOU PERFECTLY.
THAT DRESS HAS BEEN THE FAMILY BRIDAL GOWN FOR GENERATIONS.
WITH THIS WEDDING, AND MY FIRST GRANDCHILD, I'LL HAVE NO REGRETS IN LIFE.
Sniff Sniff
..MOTHER.
I'LL DO MY BEST TO FULFILL YOUR EXPECTATIONS.

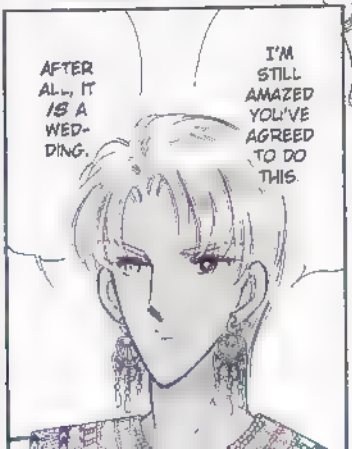

POOF
IT WAS TRULY WORTH LIVING THIS LONG.
Honk
...
NOBLE, BUT I DO BELIEVE ...
...YOUR HEART'S ALREADY BEEN GIVEN TO SOMEONE ELSE.
SO YOU'RE ACTUALLY MARRYING MY BROTHER, YURI?
SEEMS SO, NEFERT.
I'LL BE RIGHT THERE.
MASTER, THE BOAT IS READY.
THE JOURNEY TO THEBES SHOULD TAKE ONLY THREE DAYS.

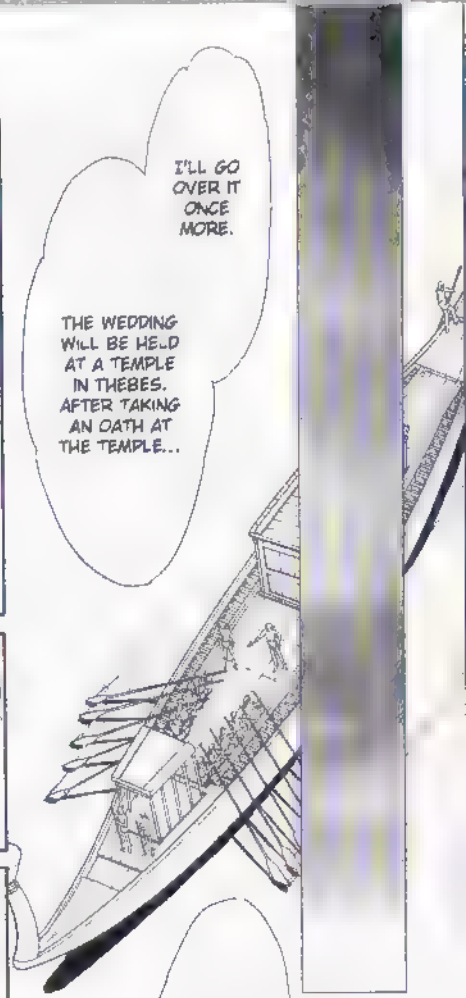

NEFERT, LISTEN...
LET'S GO, MY WIFE.
I AM IN NO WAY...
...UNSURE ABOUT THIS WEDDING. I WELCOME IT, IN FACT.

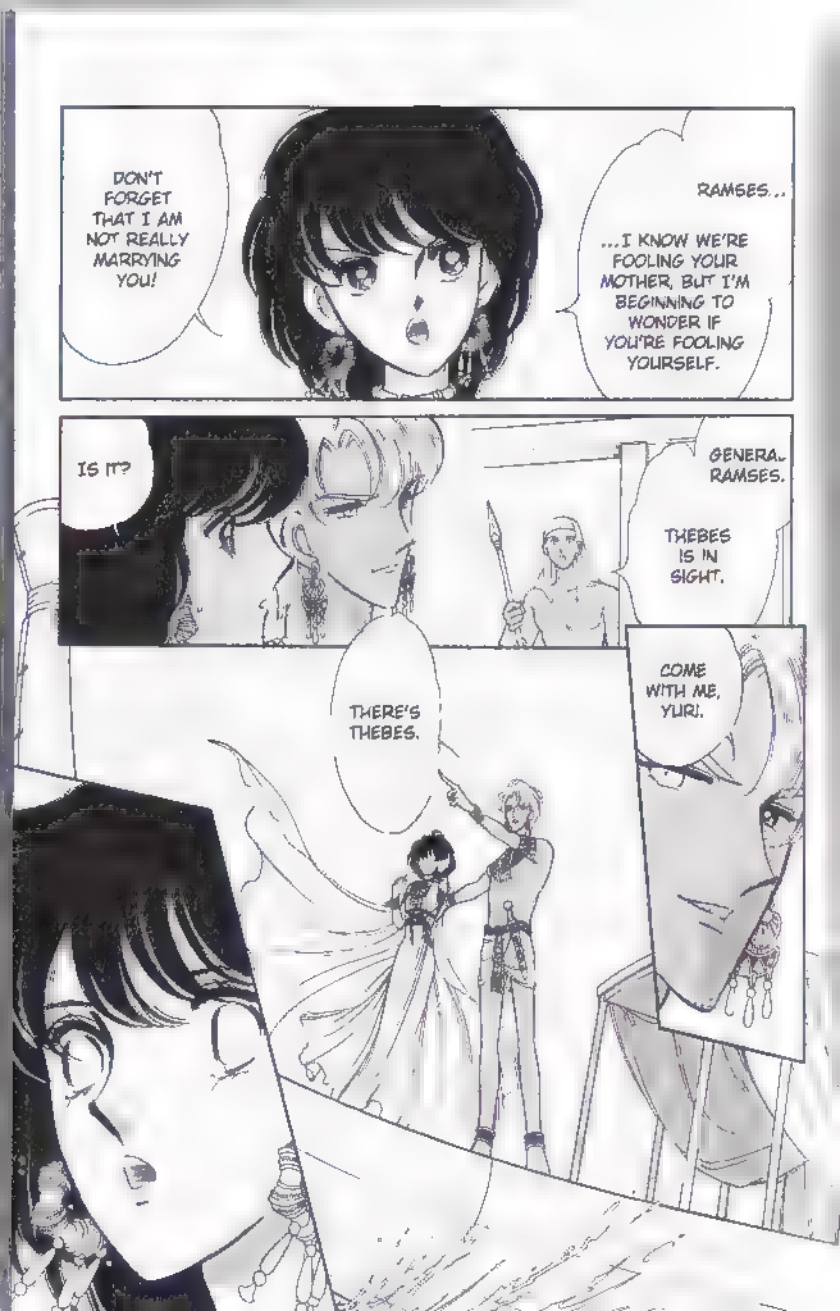

I WON'T WASTE THE OPPORTUNITIES MY PRESENCE HERE OFFERS!
I HAD NO DESIRE TO COME TO EGYPT, BUT I'M NOT GOING TO SPEND THE TIME CRYING OVER IT
I WANT TO DO
THAT MIGHT HELP KAIL.
IT ALLOWS ME TO MEET THIS STILL POWERFUL QUEEN DOWAGER OF YOURS. THE WHOLE MARRIAGE WILL HAVE BEEN WORTH
AFTER ALL. .
COMPARED WITH THE SORROW OF LOSING MY BABY PRETENDING TO MARRY YOUR BROTHER IS NO BIG DEAL


YOU'VE TOLD ME SO MANY TIMES I CAN RECITE IT ALL BY HEART.
YES, AND WE WILL GREET THE KING'S FAMILY...
...AS SOON AS WE ARRIVE AT THEBES.


WHAT?


AFTER ALL, IT IS A WEDDING.
I'M STILL AMAZED YOU'VE AGREED TO DO THIS.

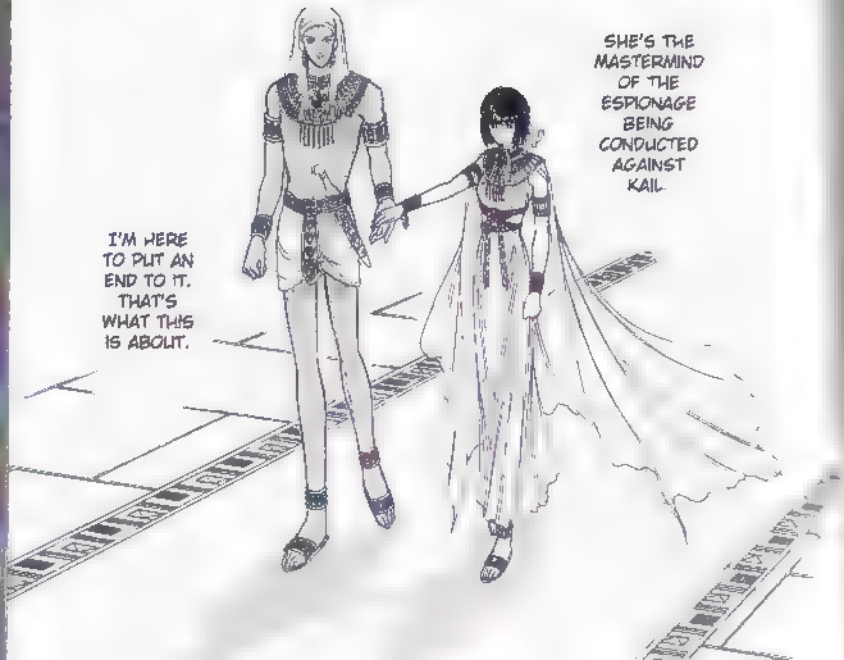

I'LL GO OVER IT ONCE MORE.
THE WEDDING WILL BE HELD AT A TEMPLE IN THEBES. AFTER TAKING AN OATH AT THE TEMPLE...
...WE WILL HOST A RECEPTION FOR IMPORTANT PRIESTS AND ARISTOCRATS. THIS WILL LAST FOR SEVEN DAYS.


RAMSES...
...I KNOW WE'RE FOOLING YOUR MOTHER, BUT I'M BEGINNING TO WONDER IF YOU'RE FOOLING YOURSELF.
DON'T FORGET THAT I AM NOT REALLY MARRYING YOU!
GENERAL RAMSES.
THEBES IS IN SIGHT.
IS IT?
COME WITH ME, YURI.
THERE'S THEBES.

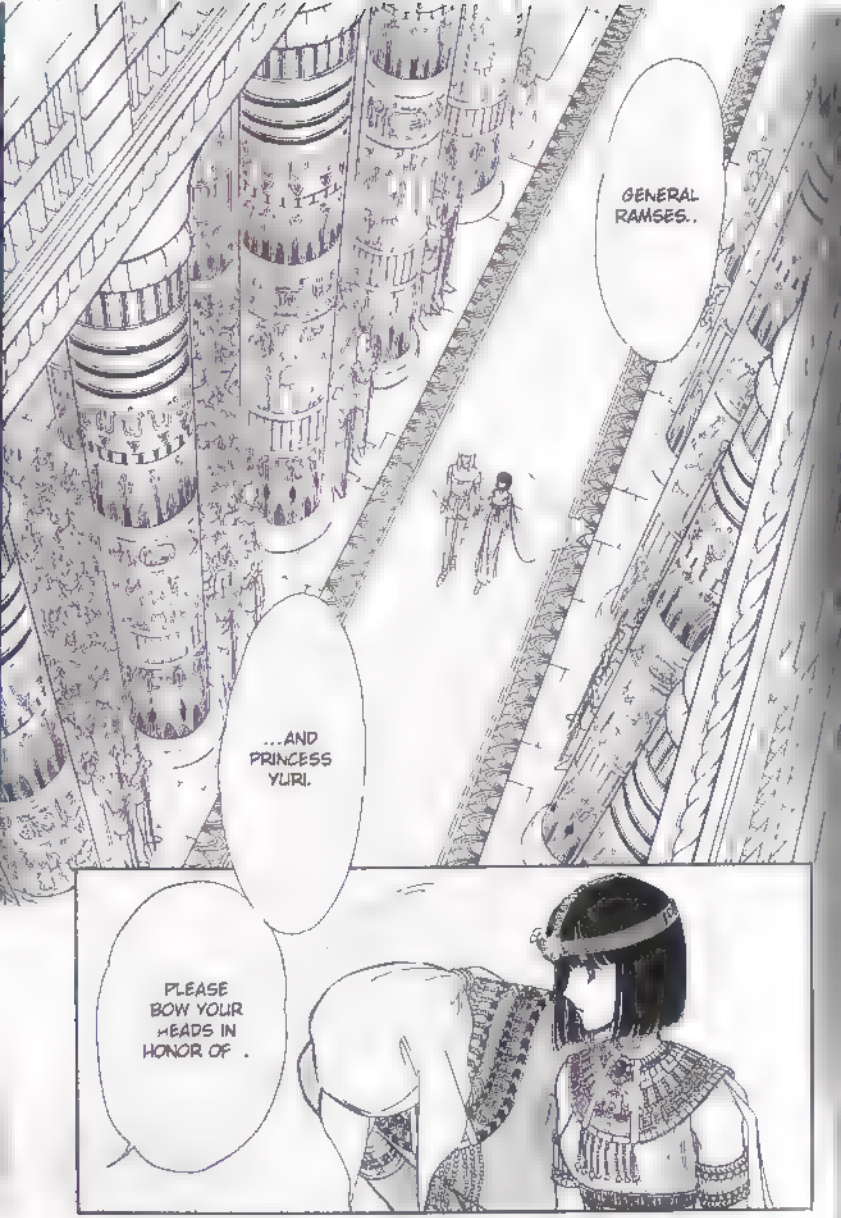
THE EGYPTIAN CAPITAL OF THEBES.
THEBES IS THE MOST FAMOUS OF THE NUMEROUS CAPITALS OF ANCIENT EGYPT
PEOPLE CALLED THE STREETS ON THE EAST BANK OF THE NILE, "THEBES OF THE HUNDRED GATES."
ON THE WEST BANK OF THE NILE LAY THE ROYAL TOMBS KNOWN AS THE "VALLEY OF THE KINGS." THEBES WAS IN IT'S PRIME.
GENERAL RAMSES WILL ARRIVE SOON.
HE IS ACCOMPANIED BY HIS BRIDE.
HERE THEY ARE!
THE WOMAN BESIDE GENERAL RAMSES! SHE MUST BE HIS BRIDE!
I'M JEALOUS
THE WOMAN WHO'S FINALLY LANDED HIM.
HE'S WRIGGLED OFF SO MANY HOOKS IN THE PAST I CAN'T WAIT TO SEE.
OH, MY GOODNESS.
WHAT DOES SHE LOOK LIKE?

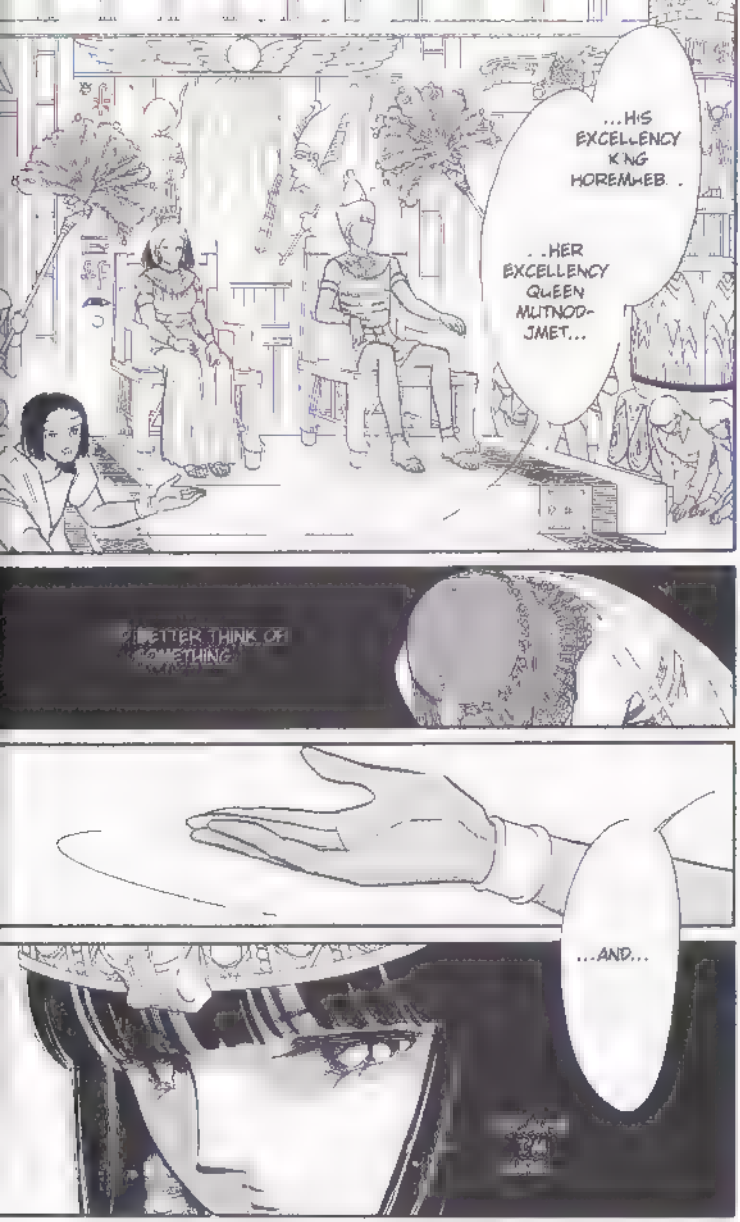
BUZZ
SHE MUST BE FROM FAR AWAY! LOOK AT HER IVORY SKIN!
I THOUGHT THE GENERAL LIKED VOLUPTUOUS WOMEN
SHE'S SO PETITE!
BUZZ BUZZ

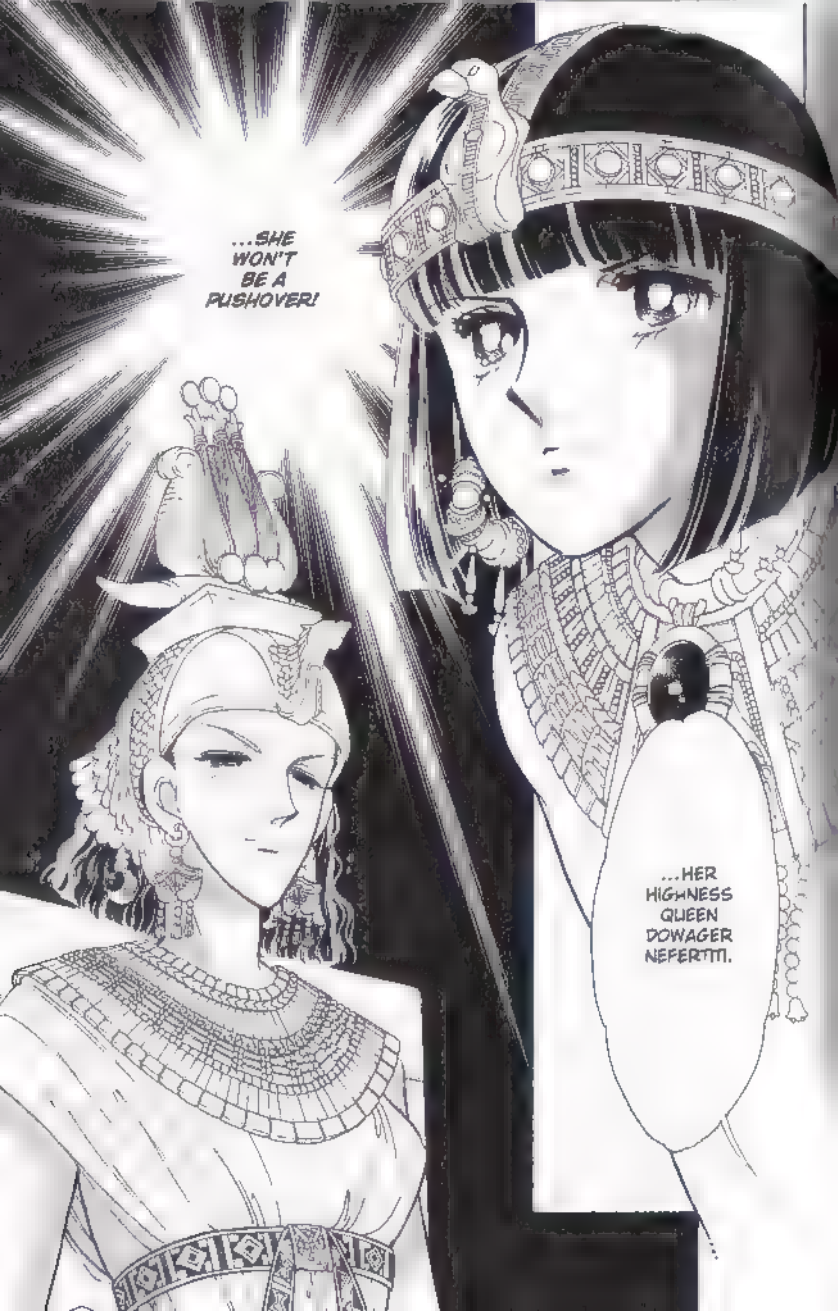
I'M HERE TO STOP QUEEN NEFERTITI.


SHE'S THE MASTERMIND OF THE ESPIONAGE BEING CONDUCTED AGAINST KAIL.
I'M HERE TO PUT AN END TO IT. THAT'S WHAT THIS IS ABOUT.

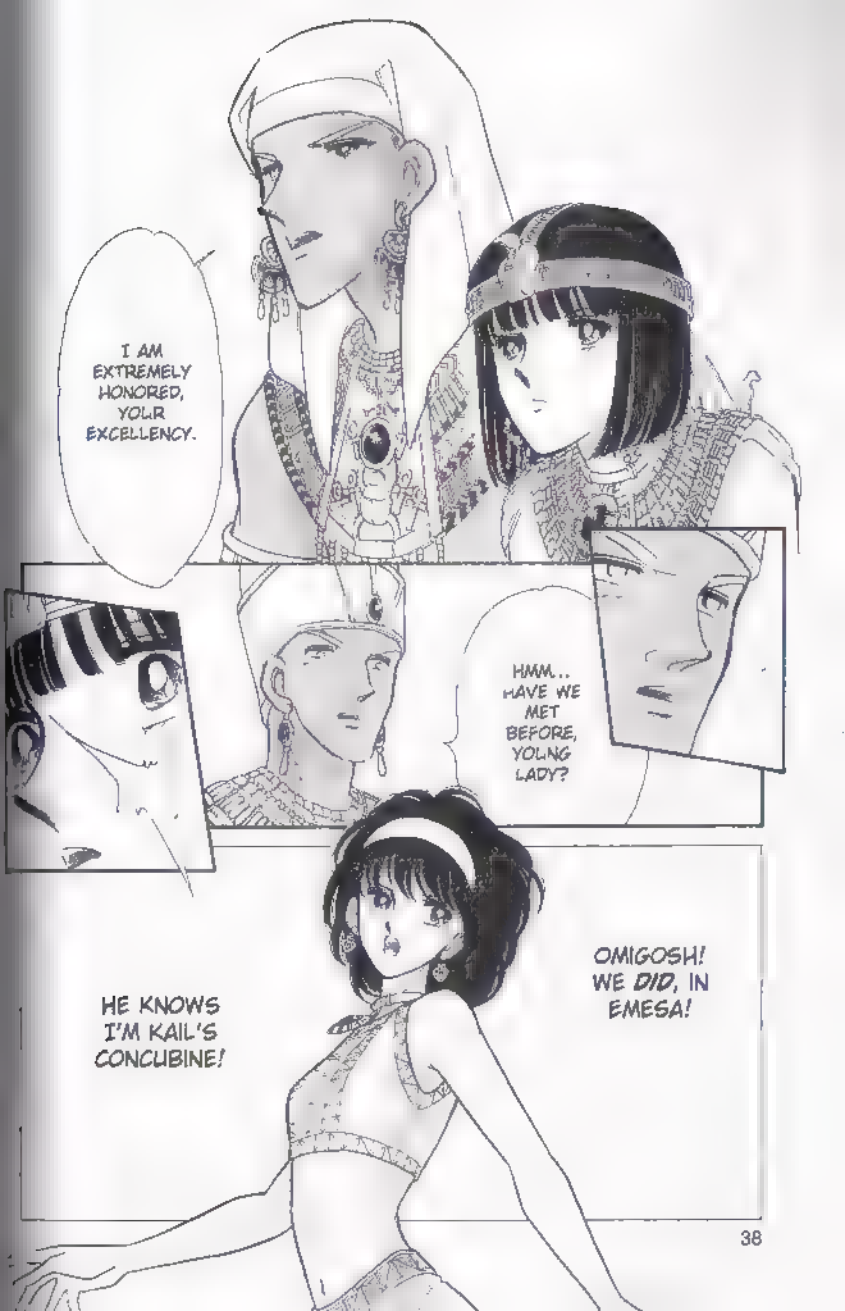
GULP
I DON'T YET KNOW HOW I'LL DO IT, BUT..


GENERAL RAMSES..
...AND PRINCESS YURI.
PLEASE BOW YOUR HEADS IN HONOR OF .

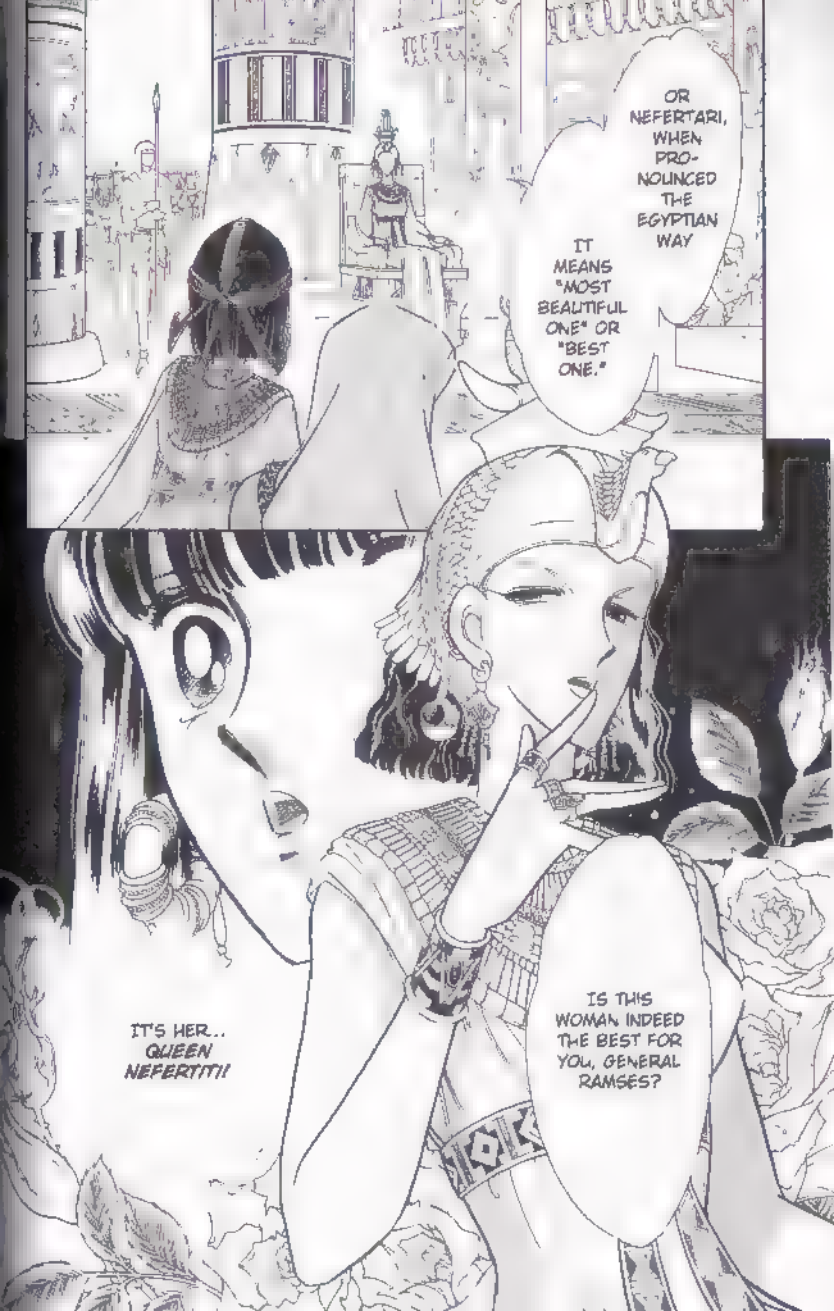

...HIS EXCELLENCY KING HOREMHEB...
...HER EXCELLENCY QUEEN MUTNODJMET...
BETTER THINK OF SOMETHING.
...AND...

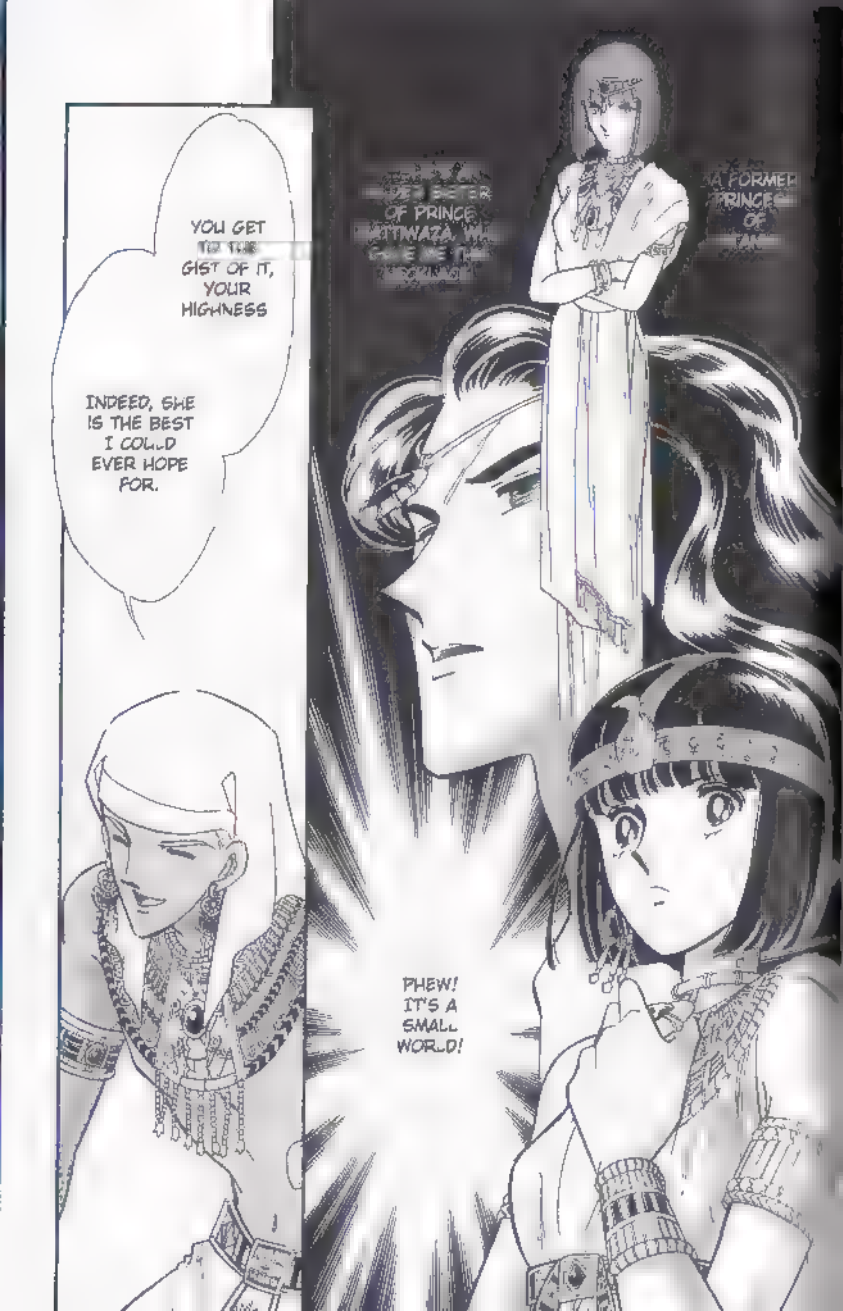

...SHE WON'T BE A PUSHOVER!
...HER HIGHNESS QUEEN DOWAGER NEFERTITI.

GENERAL LSER RAMSES.
MY CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR LONG-AWAITED NUPTIALS.
AND I CONGRATULATE YOUR FIANCÉE TOO.

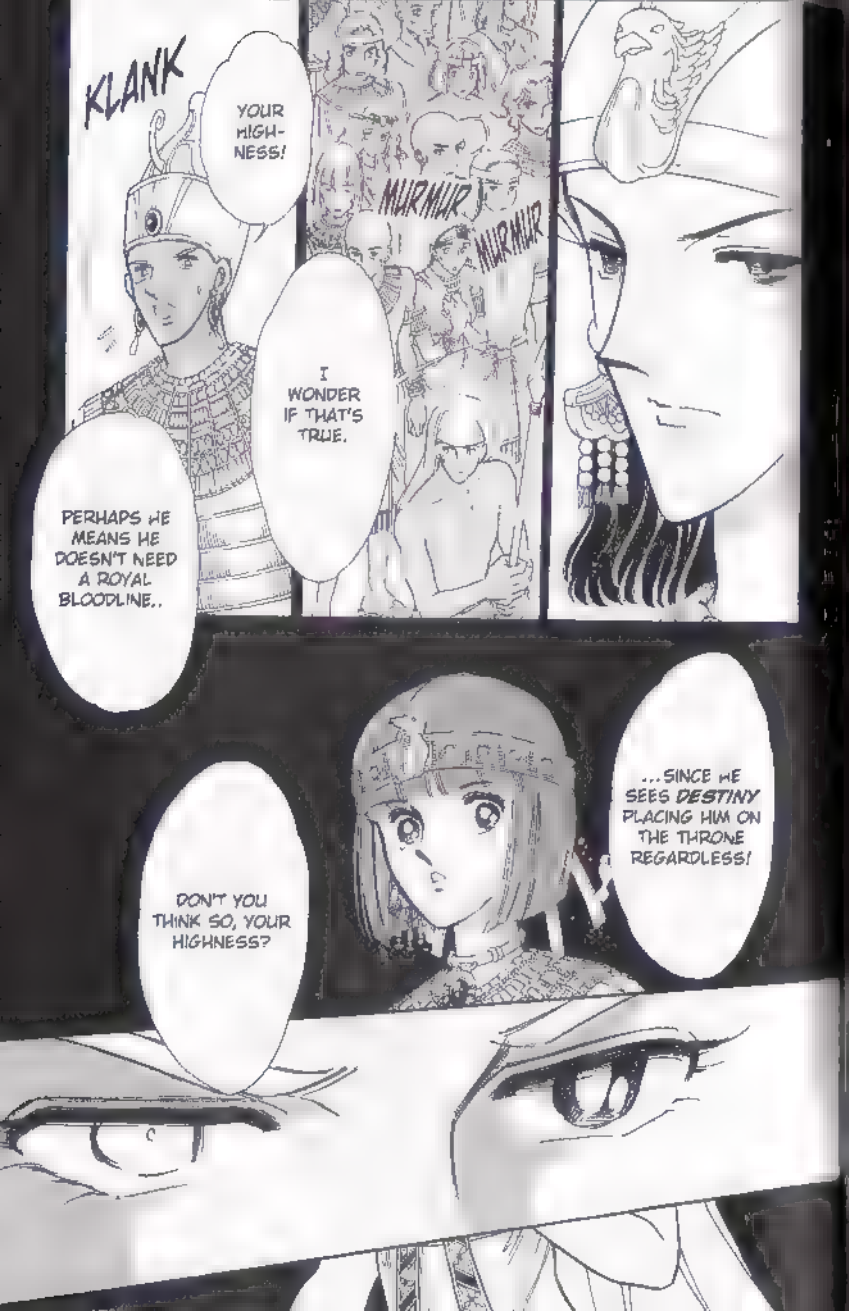

I AM EXTREMELY HONORED, YOUR EXCELLENCY.
HMM... HAVE WE MET BEFORE, YOUNG LADY?
OMIGOSH! WE *DID*, IN EMESA!
HE KNOWS I'M KAIL'S CONCUBINE!

GLARE
BEGGING YOUR PARDON, YOUR EXCEL-LENCY...
...BUT IT SEEMS TO ME THAT YOU'RE FLIRTING WITH MY FIANCÉE
UM... NO, I WAS JUST . DISTRACTED.
HER NAME IS NAP-TERA...
.. YOUR EXCEL-LENCY.
I DIDN'T EXPECT THIS!
MY NAME ...?
WHAT IS YOUR NAME, MY DEAR?
I SEE.
NAPTERA, EH?


OR NEFERTARI, WHEN PRONOUNCED THE EGYPTIAN WAY
IT MEANS "MOST BEAUTIFUL ONE" OR "BEST ONE."
IS THIS WOMAN INDEED THE BEST FOR YOU, GENERAL RAMSES?
IT'S HER.. QUEEN NEFERTITI!!


YOU GET THE GIST OF IT, YOUR HIGHNESS
INDEED, SHE IS THE BEST I COULD EVER HOPE FOR.
PHEW! IT'S A SMALL WORLD!

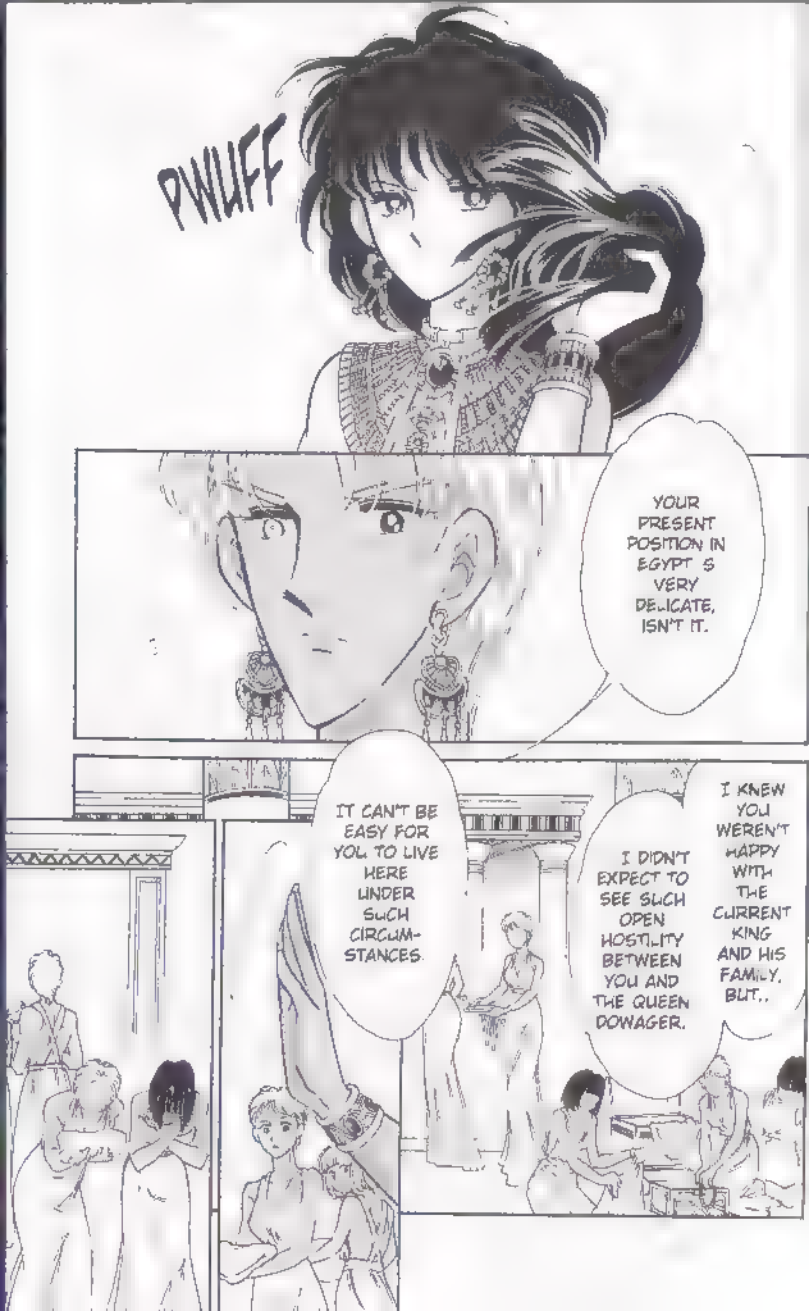
HMM..
I'D HAVE THOUGHT YOU'D CHOSEN HER..
...BECAUSE YOU SAW HER AS MOST SUITABLE TO BE A QUEEN OF EGYPT.
HA HA HA...VERY AMUSING, YOUR HIGHNESS.
I'VE OFFERED YOU ANY ONE OF MY SIX DAUGHTERS FOR A BRIDE, BUT YOU'VE NEVER ACCEPTED
YOU DON'T *LIKE* MY DAUGHTERS..
...RAMSES?
YOUR HIGHNESS..
I DECLINED ONLY BECAUSE I DID NOT WANT TO SUGGEST I HAD AMBITIONS TO BECOME KING

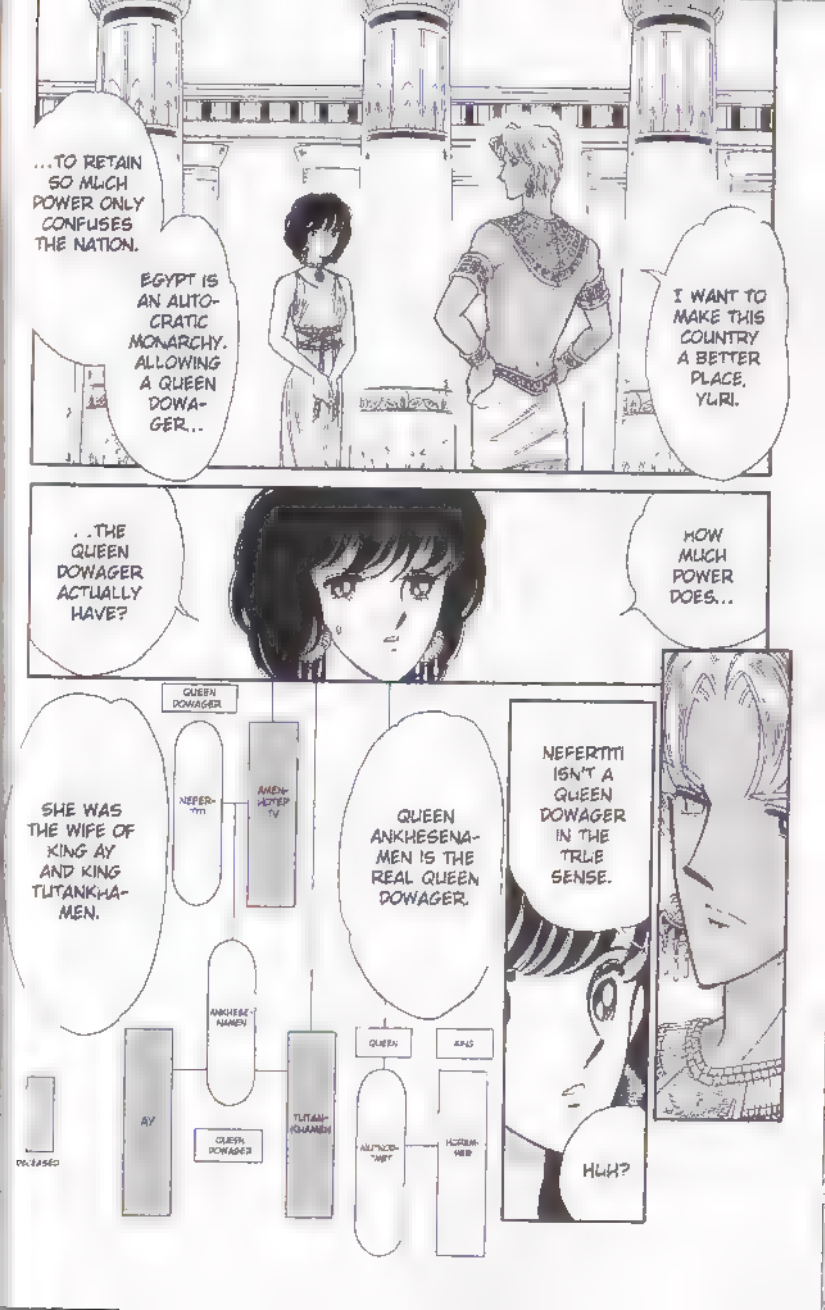

KLANK
YOUR HIGH-NESS!
MURMUR
MURMUR
I WONDER IF THAT'S TRUE.
PERHAPS HE MEANS HE DOESN'T NEED A ROYAL BLOODLINE..
...SINCE HE SEES DESTINY PLACING HIM ON THE THRONE REGARDLESS!
DON'T YOU THINK SO, YOUR HIGHNESS?

Hu sH
HA HA HA HA HA!
YOU THINK I HOPE TO BECOME KING OF EGYPT?
AND THAT I CHOSE TH.S WOMAN BECAUSE SHE'LL MAKE A GREAT QUEEN?
HA HA HA HA!

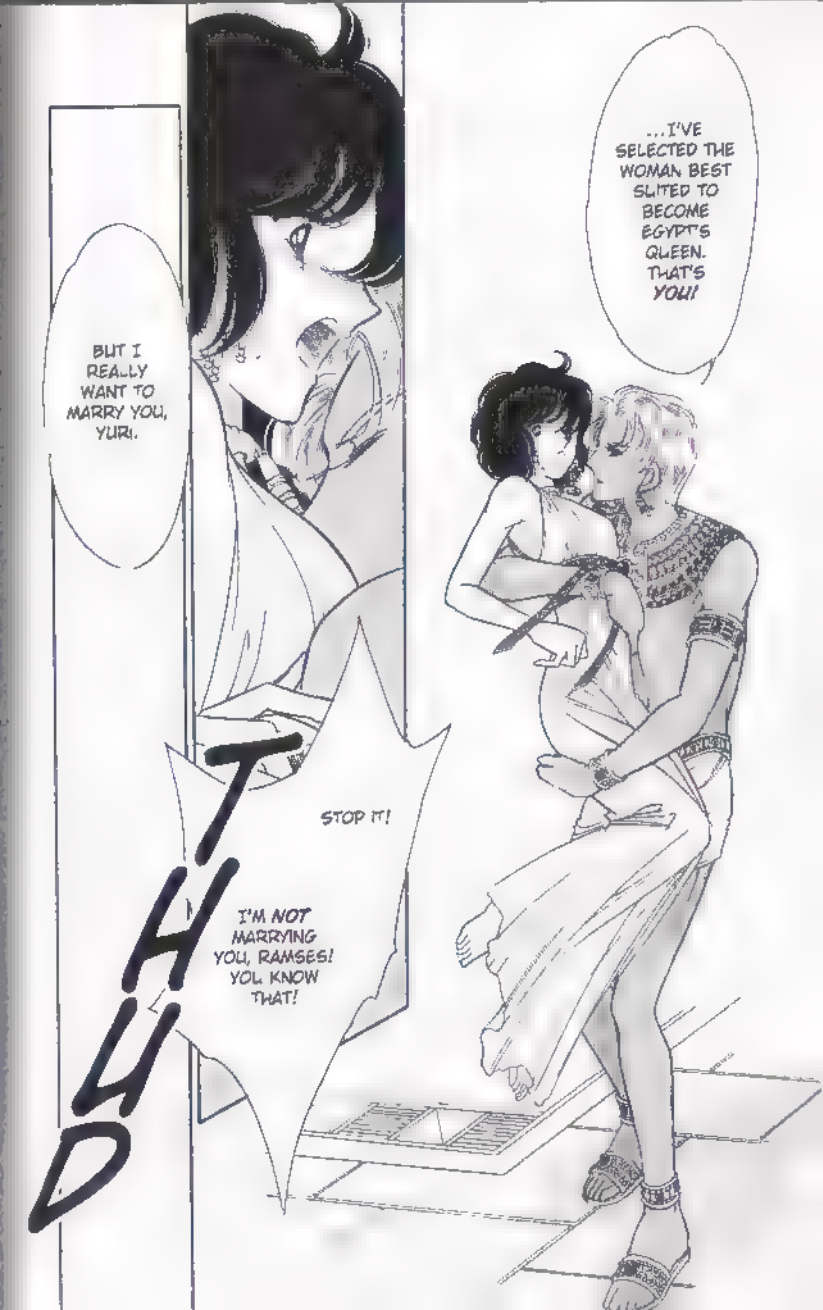
SLAP
ARE YOU CRAZY?!
HOW DARE YOU DO THAT IN PUBLIC!
SQUEEZE
I HUMBLY REQUEST YOUR HONORABLE PRESENCE.
WE WILL WED IN TEN DAYS.
...I LOVE HER DEARLY
SEE? SHE'S FIERY, BUT...

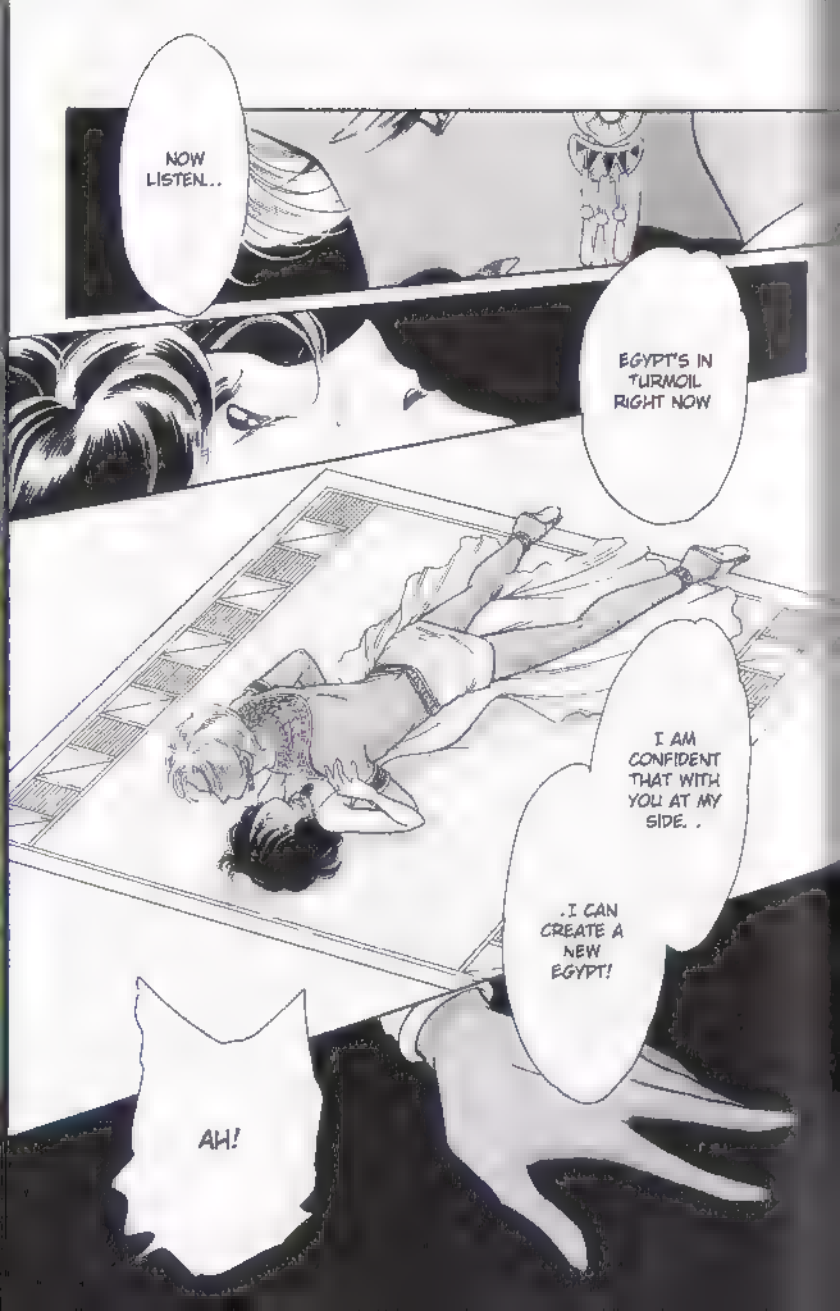
...WHAT WAS YOUR IMPRESSION?
WHAT DO YOU THINK, YURI?
I INTRODUCED YOU TO NEFERTITI AS PROMISED, SO...

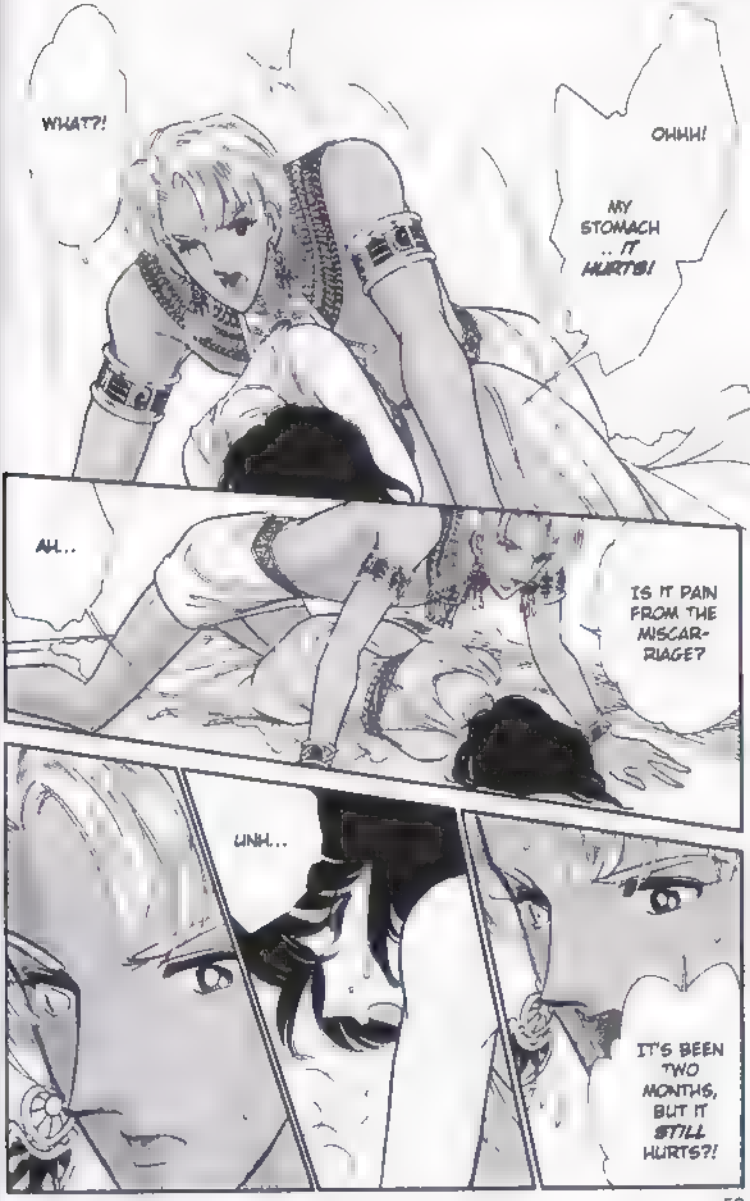

PWUFF
YOUR PRESENT POSITION IN EGYPT S VERY DELICATE, ISN'T IT.
I KNEW YOU WEREN'T HAPPY WITH THE CURRENT KING AND HIS FAMILY. BUT,,
I DIDN'T EXPECT TO SEE SUCH OPEN HOSTILITY BETWEEN YOU AND THE QUEEN DOWAGER.
IT CAN'T BE EASY FOR YOU TO LIVE HERE UNDER SUCH CIRCUM-STANCES.


...TO RETAIN SO MUCH POWER ONLY CONFUSES THE NATION.
EGYPT IS AN AUTOCRATIC MONARCHY. ALLOWING A QUEEN DOWAGER...
I WANT TO MAKE THIS COUNTRY A BETTER PLACE, YURI.
...THE QUEEN DOWAGER ACTUALLY HAVE?
HOW MUCH POWER DOES...
QUEEN DOWAGER
NEFERTITI
AMENHOTEP IV
SHE WAS THE WIFE OF KING AY AND KING TUTANKHAMEN.
QUEEN ANKHESENAMEN IS THE REAL QUEEN DOWAGER.
NEFERTITI ISN'T A QUEEN DOWAGER IN THE TRUE SENSE.
HUH?
ANKHESENAMEN
AY
QUEEN DOWAGER
TUTANKHAMEN
QUEEN
AMES
ALTMOSE-MERY
HORUM-HEB
DECEASED

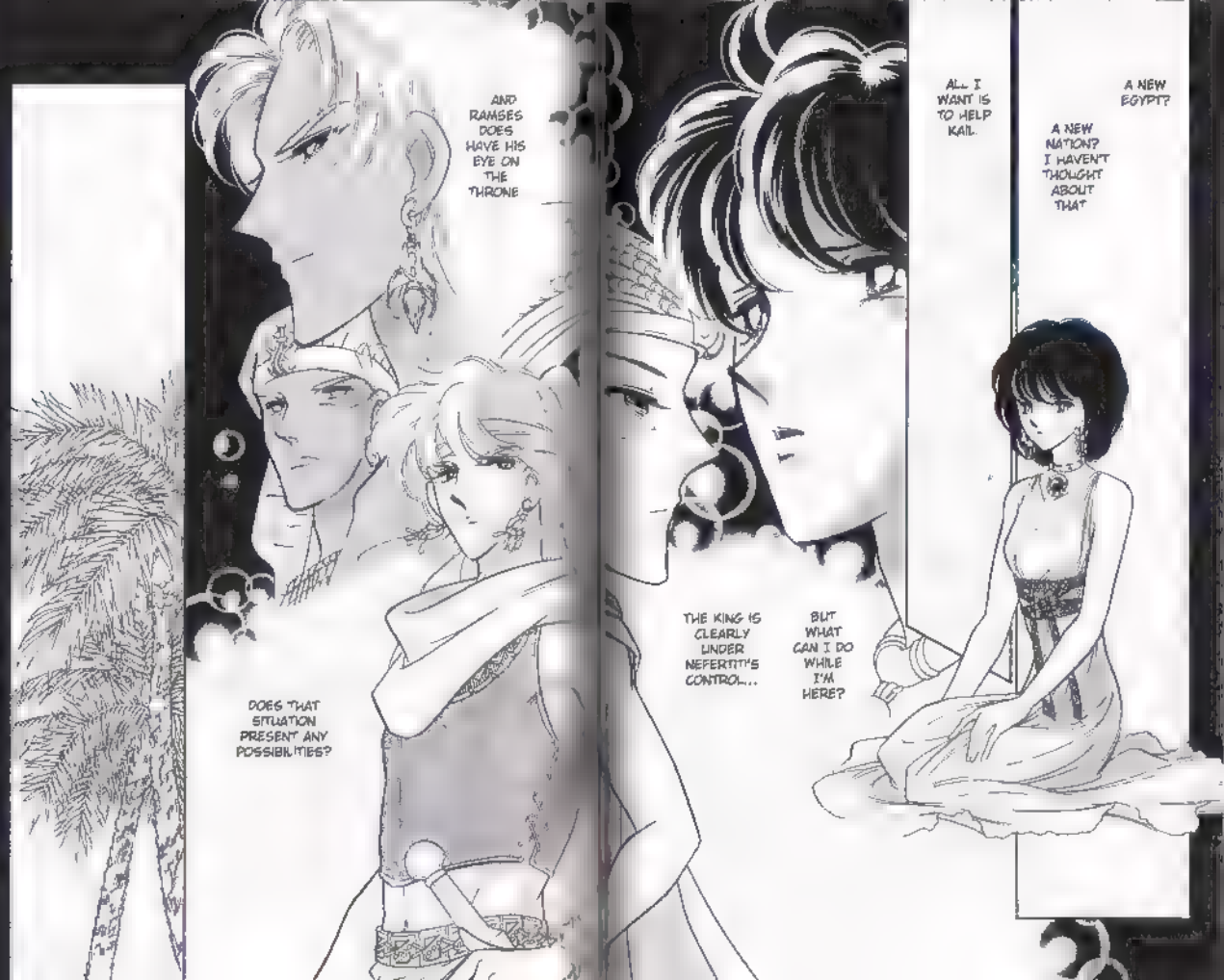
HOWEVER, IF ANYONE MENTIONS THE "QUEEN DOWAGER" TODAY...
...IT IS IN REFERENCE TO NEFERTITI. THAT'S HOW INFLUENTIAL SHE IS.
THAT'S WHY...
...WHAT WE HAVE WITH NAKIA IN THE HITTITE EMPIRE?
ISN'T THAT...
YES.
IF THE SITUATION CONTINUES, THE COUNTRY WILL EVENTUALLY SUFFER A TERRIBLE FATE THAT MUCH IS CERTAIN.


...I'VE SELECTED THE WOMAN BEST SUITED TO BECOME EGYPT'S QUEEN. THAT'S YOU!
BUT I REALLY WANT TO MARRY YOU, YURI.
STOP IT!
I'M NOT MARRYING YOU, RAMSES! YOU KNOW THAT!
THUD


NOW LISTEN..
EGYPT'S IN TURMOIL RIGHT NOW
I AM CONFIDENT THAT WITH YOU AT MY SIDE. .
.I CAN CREATE A NEW EGYPT!
AH!


WHAT?!
OHHH!
MY STOMACH .. IT HURTS!
AH...
IS IT PAIN FROM THE MISCAR-RIAGE?
UNH...
IT'S BEEN TWO MONTHS, BUT IT STILL HURTS?!

SOME-
BODY!
WE NEED
HELP!
SOME-
BODY!
Pbbt
CALL A
DOCTOR!
BRING
MEDICINE!

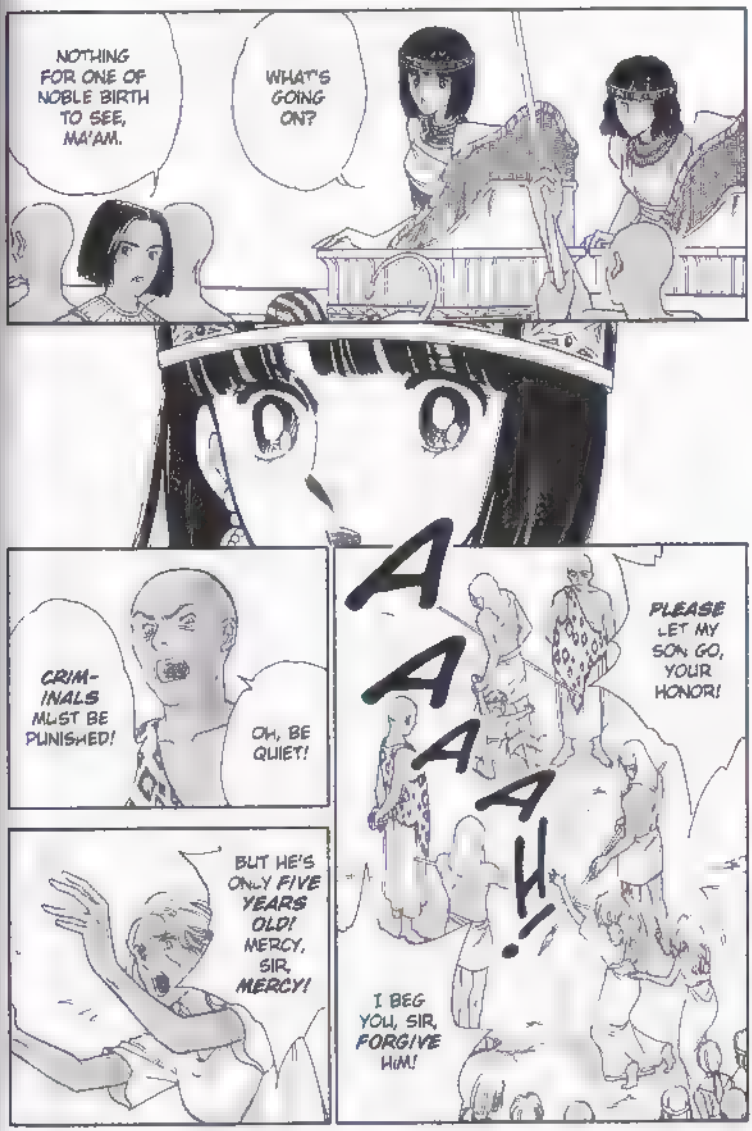

AND RAMSES DOES HAVE HIS EYE ON THE THRONE
DOES THAT SITUATION PRESENT ANY POSSIBILITIES?
THE KING IS CLEARLY UNDER NEFERTITI'S CONTROL...
BUT WHAT CAN I DO WHILE I'M HERE?
ALL I WANT IS TO HELP KAIL
A NEW NATION? I HAVEN'T THOUGHT ABOUT THAT
A NEW EGYPT?

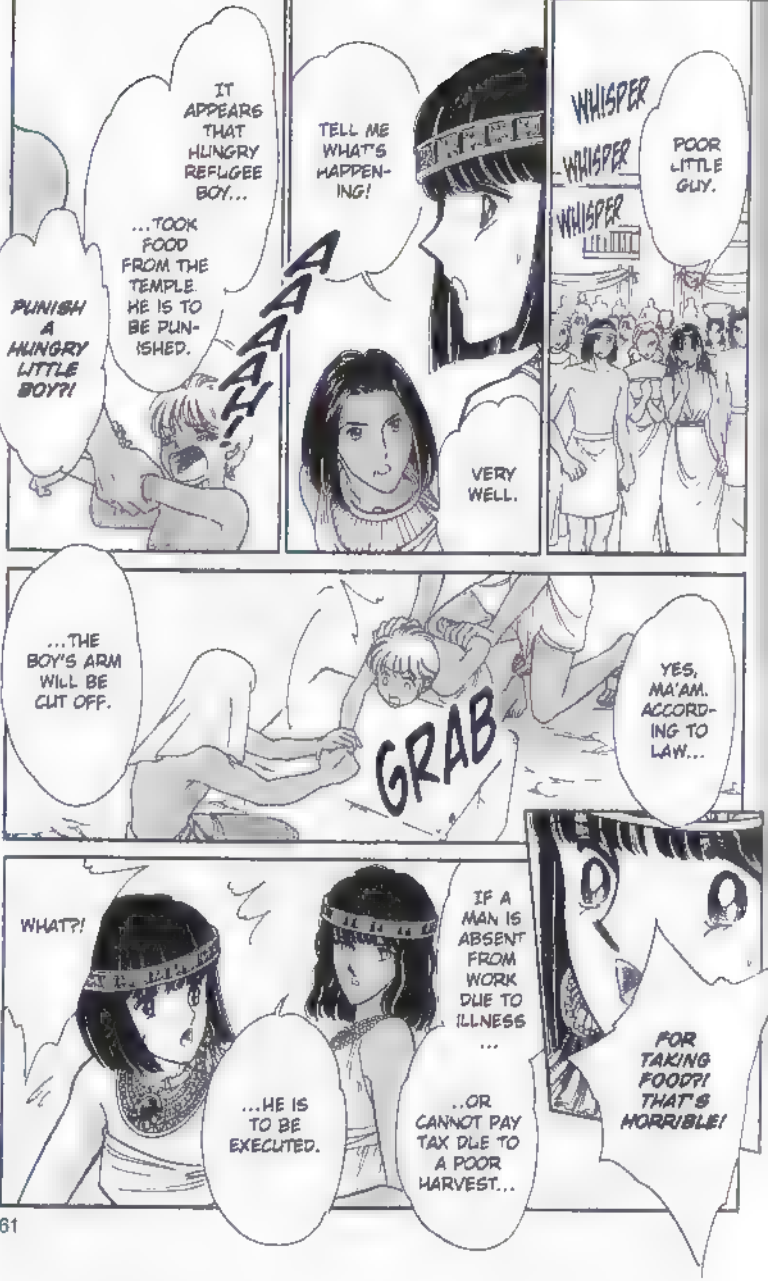
WEREN'T YOU LISTEN-ING?
I SAID YOU'D BE VERY BUSY FOR THE NEXT TEN DAYS.
NEXT YOU MUST VISIT THE TOMBS OF THE KINGS.
AND THEN YOU MUST OFFER PRAYERS AT EACH TEMPLE AND...
THERE'S MUCH TO BE DONE!
I WASN'T, SINCE I COULDN'T CARE LESS ABOUT THE WEDDING CEREMONY.
THERE'S MORE?!
...BEFORE THE WEDDING. TO THE FIRST...
..WAS GREETING THE ROYAL FAMILY. YOU DID THAT YESTER-DAY.

LET'S FIRST VISIT THE TEMPLE OF...
.. OUR MOTHER GODDESS ISIS.
IT'S SO LIVELY IN THE CAPITAL I LOVE IT!
WHEW GOTTA REMEMBER THE ERA.
ALL THIS WAS ENTIRELY BUILT BY HAND?
IT'S AMAZING.
YOU SPEAK AS IF YOU FIND THAT STRANGE.
LOOK!
IT'S ALL HERE.. EXOTIC WARES IN THE SHOPS, ENTERTAINERS ON THE STREETS...

AH! I SEE THE MERCHANTS FROM PUNT
THEY'RE KNOWN EVERYWHERE FOR THEIR BEAUTIFUL GEMS.
WHO ARE THOSE PEOPLE?
NEFERT ...
OH, THEY'RE REFUGEES FROM THE COUNTRY-SIDE.
THE HARVEST HAS BEEN POOR IN THE LAST FEW YEARS, AND MANY FARMERS HAVE MIGRATED TO THE CAPITAL.

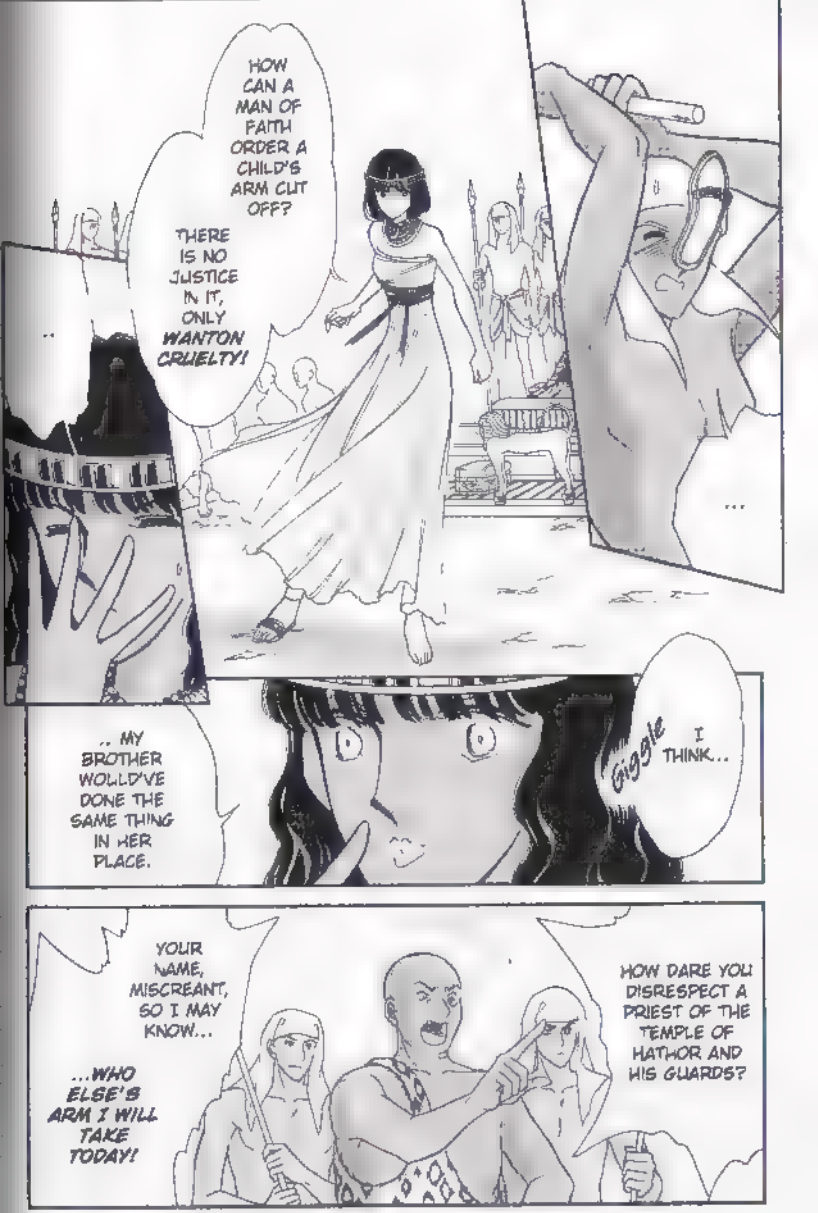
EGYPT'S FARMS... FAILING...
A BRUTAL PORTENT OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DISASTER.
RAMSES IS RIGHT, EGYPT'S IN PRETTY BAD SHAPE.
UNFORTU-NATELY, THEY CAN'T FIND JOBS OR FOOD HERE EITHER.
EVEN SO, THEBES IS ATTRACTING MORE AND MORE PEOPLE LIKE THEM.
AAAH! EEEE!


NOTHING FOR ONE OF NOBLE BIRTH TO SEE, MA'AM.
WHAT'S GOING ON?
AAAAH!
CRIMINALS MUST BE PUNISHED!
OH, BE QUIET!
PLEASE LET MY SON GO, YOUR HONOR!
BUT HE'S ONLY FIVE YEARS OLD! MERCY, SIR, MERCY!
I BEG YOU, SIR, FORGIVE HIM!

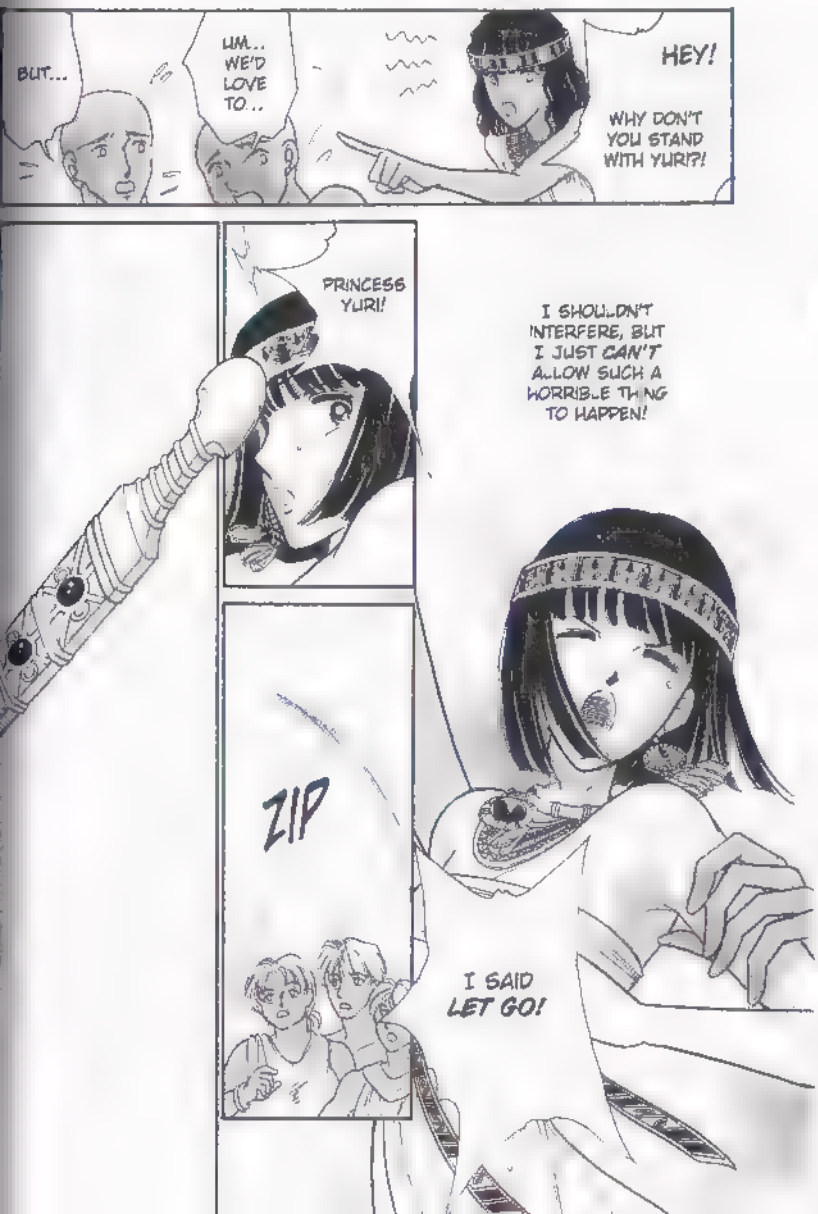

IT APPEARS THAT HUNGRY REFUGEE BOY...
...TOOK FOOD FROM THE TEMPLE. HE IS TO BE PUNISHED.
PUNISH A HUNGRY LITTLE BOY?!
AAAAH!
TELL ME WHAT'S HAPPENING!
VERY WELL.
WHISPER
WHISPER
WHISPER
POOR LITTLE GUY.
...THE BOY'S ARM WILL BE CUT OFF.
GRAB
YES, MA'AM. ACCORDING TO LAW...
WHAT?!
...HE IS TO BE EXECUTED.
IF A MAN IS ABSENT FROM WORK DUE TO ILLNESS ...
..OR CANNOT PAY TAX DUE TO A POOR HARVEST...
FOR TAKING FOOD?! THAT'S HORRIBLE!

AAAH!
NO! PLEASE, NO! MERCY!
HOLD HIM DOWN.
WAIT, YUR! THAT MAN...
...IS A PRIEST OF THE TEMPLE OF HATHOR!
YEAH? SO?
THAT TEMPLE HAS A STRONG RELATIONSHIP WITH NEFERTITI.
EEE!
AS MY BROTHER'S FIANCÉE, COMING INTO CONFLICT WITH IT...
...WILL PUT HIM IN A VERY DIFFICULT POSITION.
TAKE THE ARM! NOW!

WAAAH!
WHACK
WHACK
DON'T!


HOW CAN A MAN OF FAITH ORDER A CHILD'S ARM CUT OFF?
THERE IS NO JUSTICE IN IT, ONLY WANTON CRUELTY!
..
...
.. MY BROTHER WOULD'VE DONE THE SAME THING IN HER PLACE.
Giggle
I THINK..
YOUR NAME, MISCREANT, SO I MAY KNOW...
...WHO ELSE'S ARM I WILL TAKE TODAY!
HOW DARE YOU DISRESPECT A PRIEST OF THE TEMPLE OF HATHOR AND HIS GUARDS?

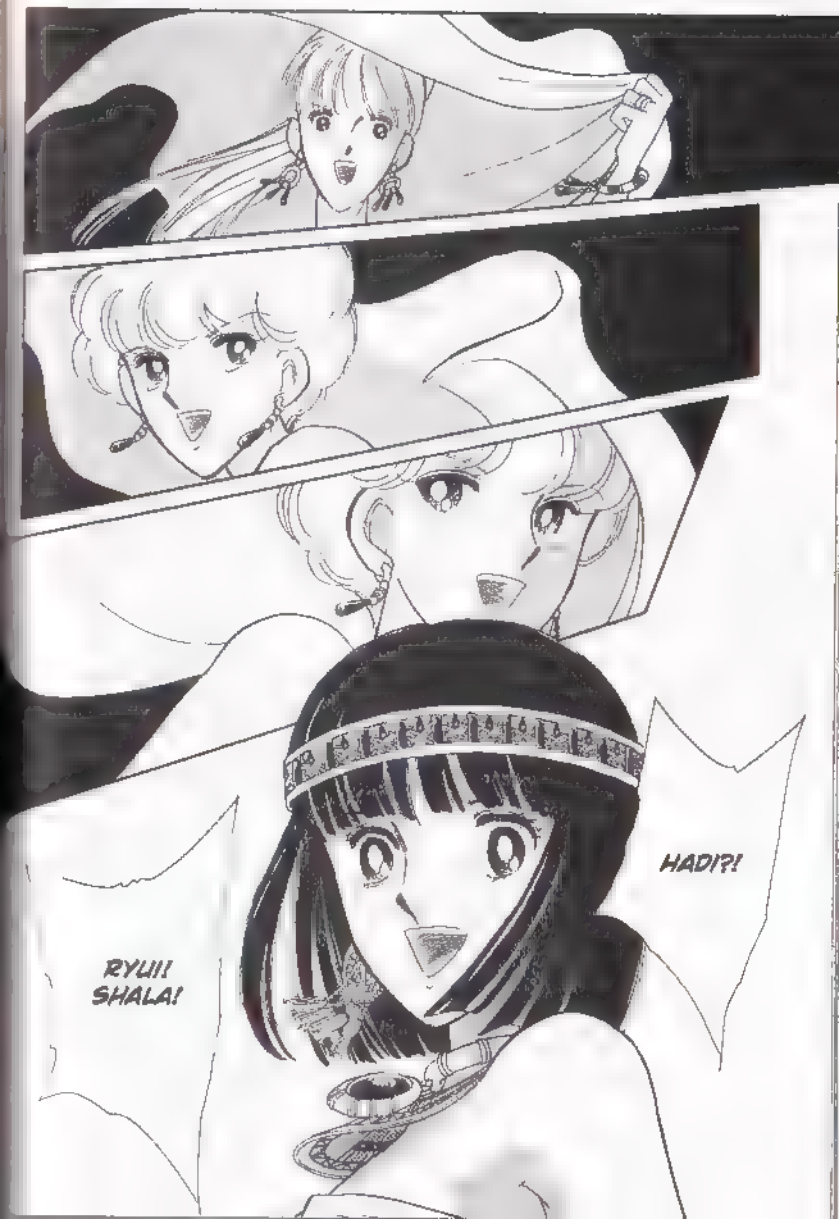
PSST
PSST
SIR, THAT WOMAN IS THE.
WHAT? GENERAL RAMSES' FIANCÉE ?!
THAT MAN WHO READILY OPPOSES HER HIGHNESS?
PRINCESS, PLEASE DO NOT INTERFERE
A THIEF IS A THIEF, WHATEVER HIS AGE, AND THE LAW'S THE LAW.
ISN'T THERE ANOTHER WAY?
CUTTING OFF H S ARM IS TERRIBLY CRUEL!
THAT'S WHY IT'S SO EFFECTIVE
WOMEN DON'T UNDERSTAND THESE THINGS
GRAB
LET GO OF ME!
PLEASE LEAVE THIS TO US, MA'AM.

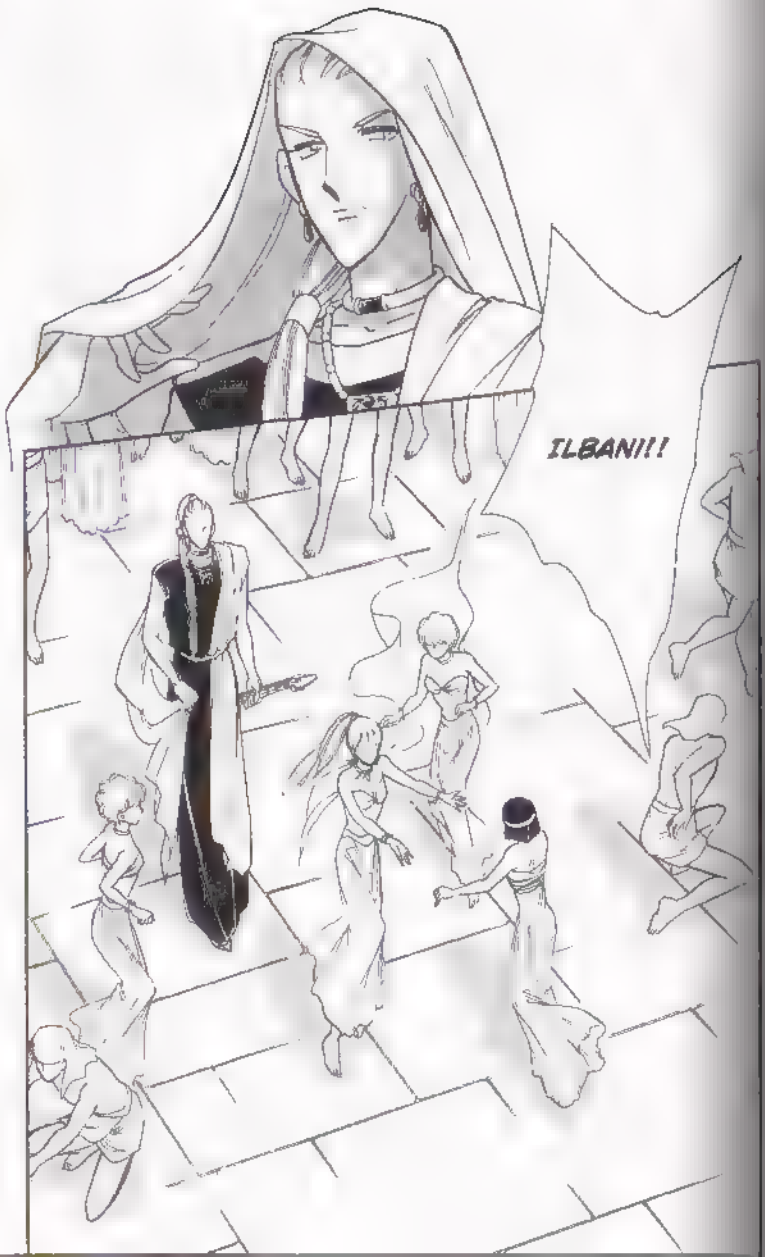

BUT...
UM... WE'D LOVE TO..
HEY!
WHY DON'T YOU STAND WITH YURI?!
PRINCESS YURI!
I SHOULDN'T INTERFERE, BUT I JUST CAN'T ALLOW SUCH A HORRIBLE THING TO HAPPEN!
ZIP
I SAID LET GO!

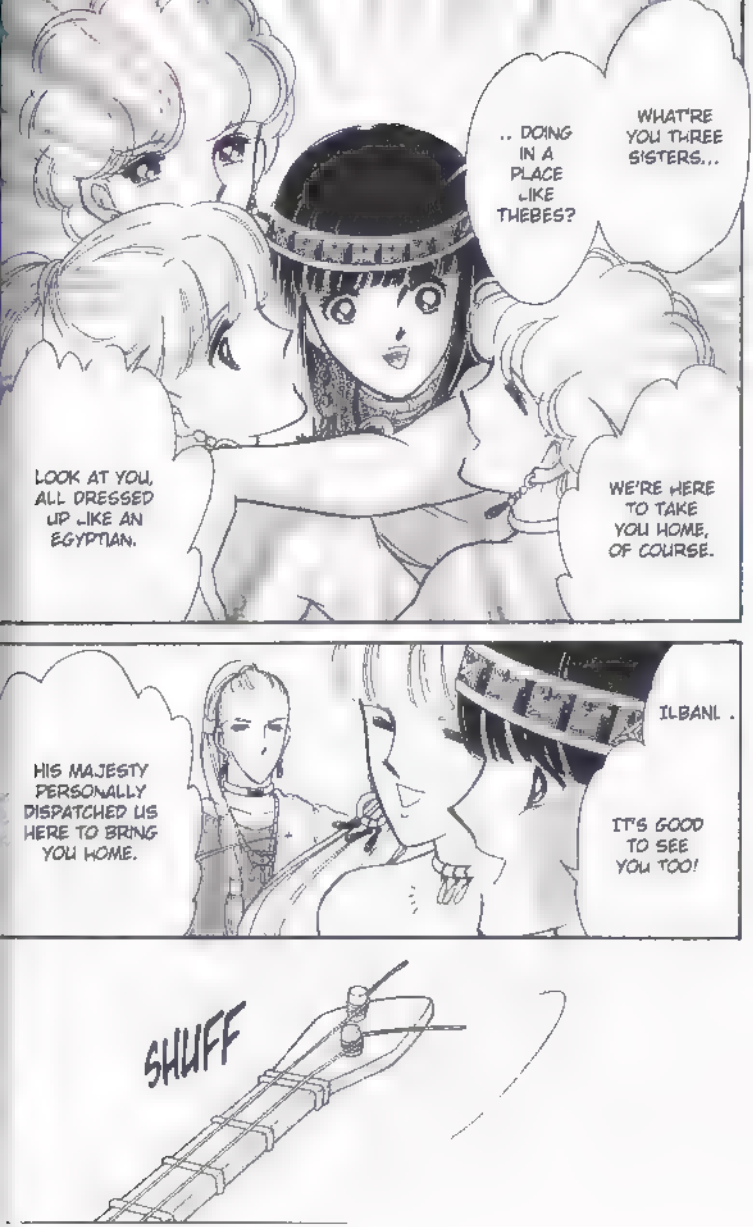
!!
WHIII
IING
WHAT IN THE WORLD ...?
SHE HAS A WEAPON!

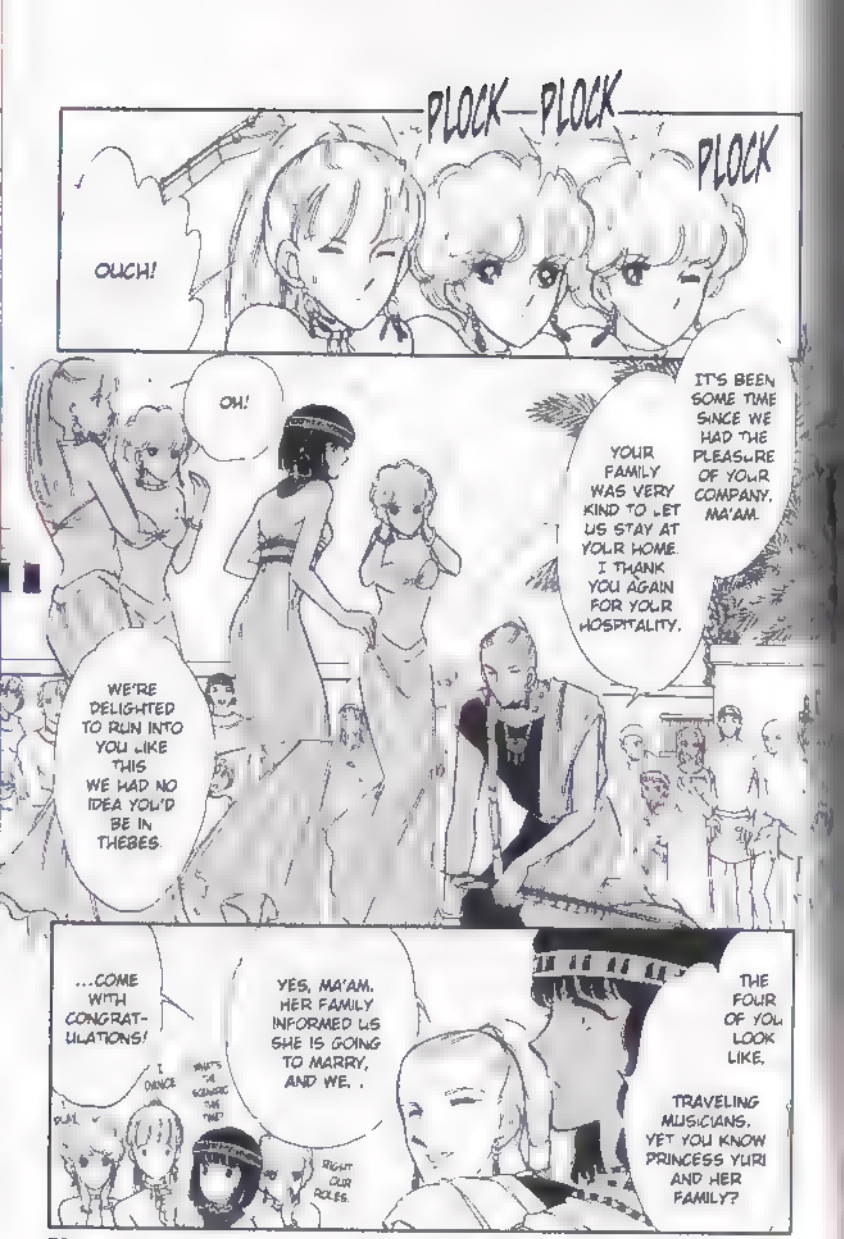
HOW DARE...!
GLOM
CA... CAPTURE HER!
COME WITH ME, LITTLE BOY!

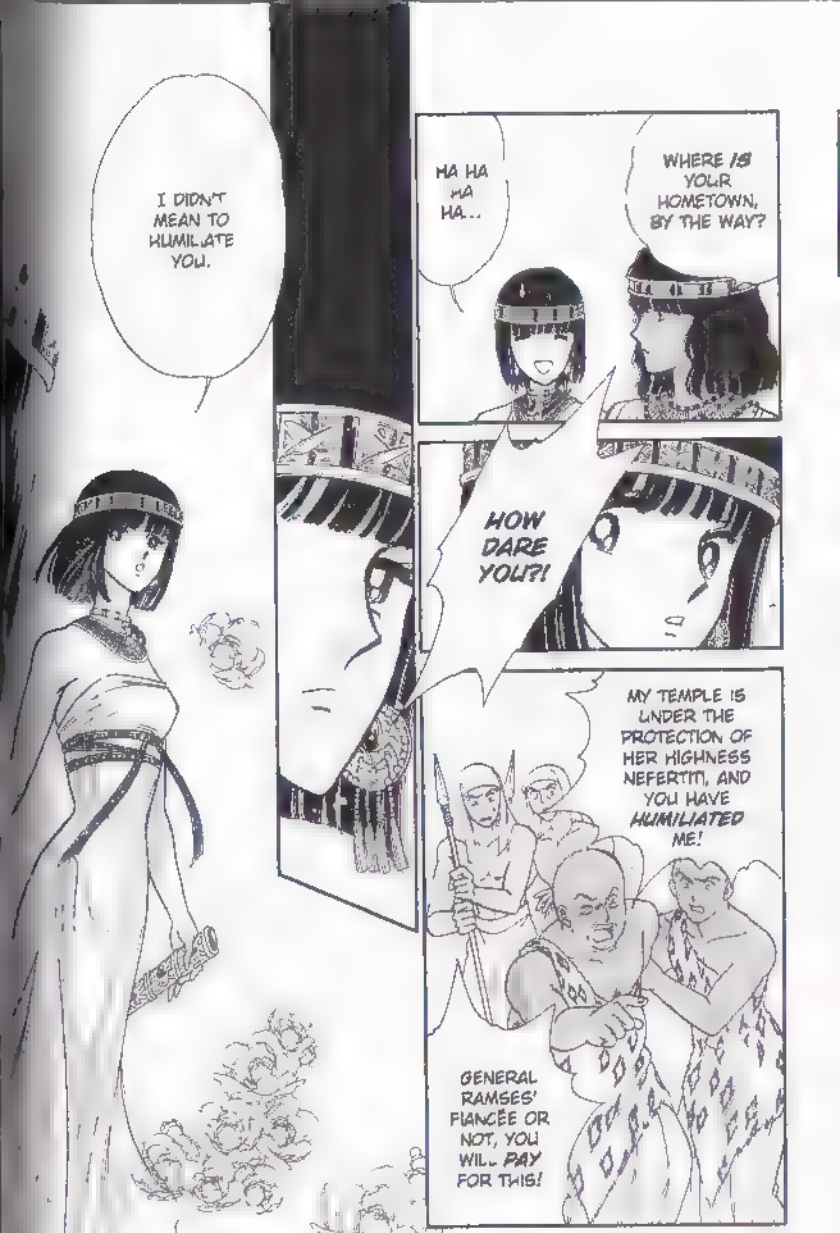
FWEET
WUP
ULP!
FWEEE
STAY OUT OF THIS, STREET DANCER ..
OH, THANK YOU, MA'AM!
PRAISES BE UPON YOU!
BACK TO YOUR MOTHER, LITTLE BOY

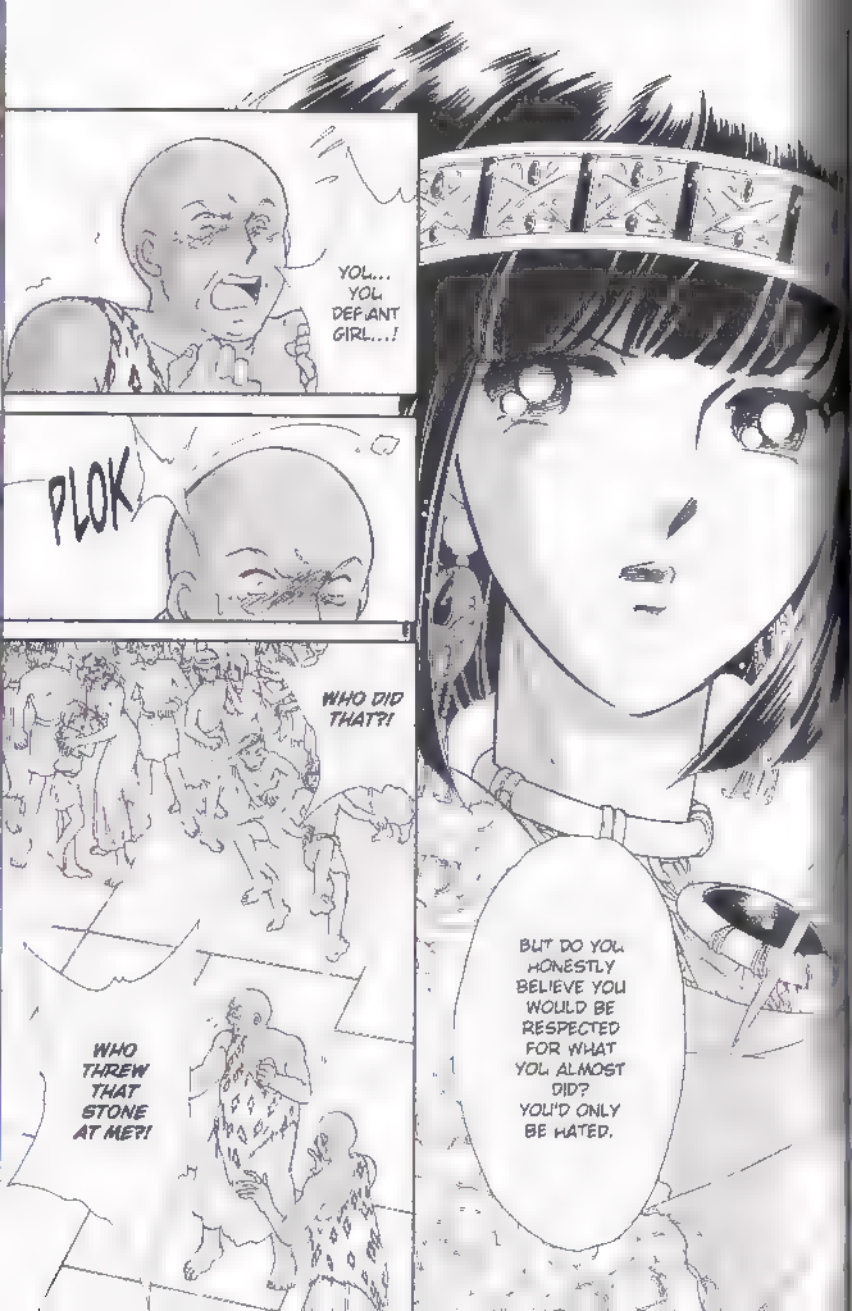

HADI?!
RYUI!
SHALA!


ILBANI!!

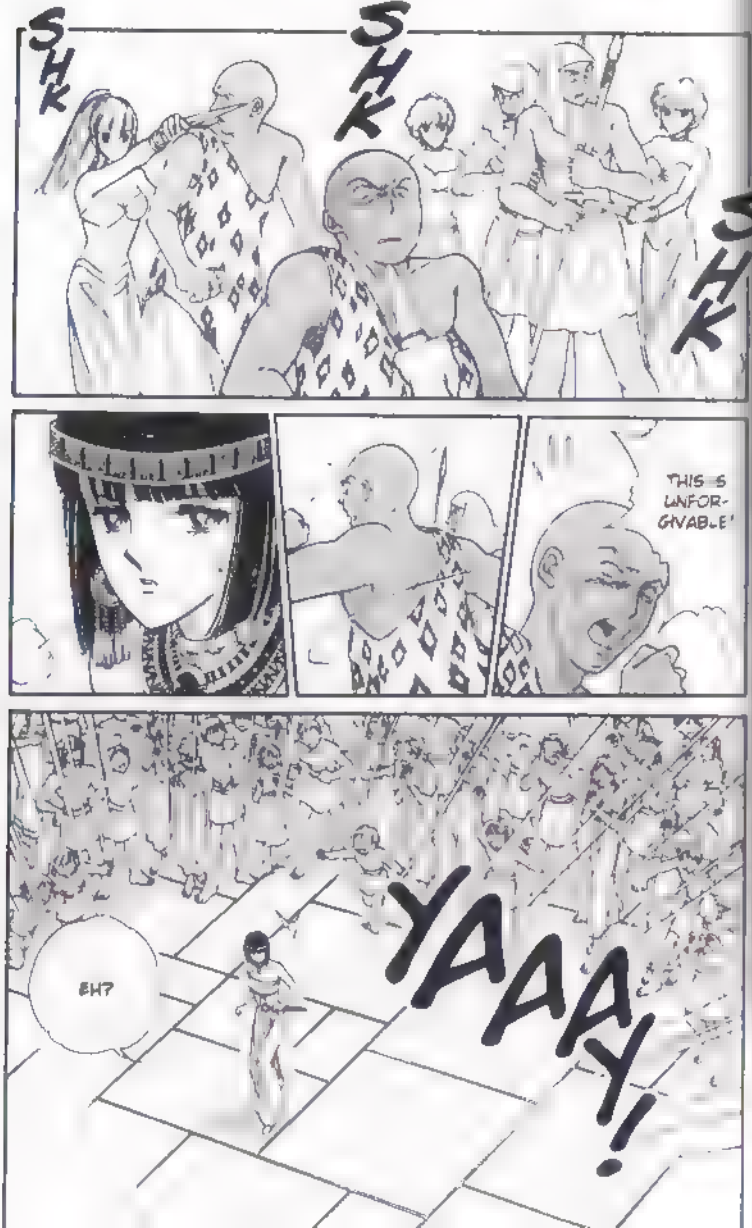

WHAT'RE YOU THREE SISTERS...
.. DOING IN A PLACE LIKE THEBES?
LOOK AT YOU, ALL DRESSED UP LIKE AN EGYPTIAN.
WE'RE HERE TO TAKE YOU HOME, OF COURSE.
ILBANI.
HIS MAJESTY PERSONALLY DISPATCHED US HERE TO BRING YOU HOME.
IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU TOO!
SHUFF


PLOCK—PLOCK
PLOCK
OUCH!
OH!
IT'S BEEN SOME TIME SINCE WE HAD THE PLEASURE OF YOUR COMPANY, MA'AM.
YOUR FAMILY WAS VERY KIND TO LET US STAY AT YOUR HOME. I THANK YOU AGAIN FOR YOUR HOSPITALITY.
WE'RE DELIGHTED TO RUN INTO YOU LIKE THIS. WE HAD NO IDEA YOU'D BE IN THEBES.
THE FOUR OF YOU LOOK LIKE,
TRAVELING MUSICIANS. YET YOU KNOW PRINCESS YURI AND HER FAMILY?
YES, MA'AM. HER FAMILY INFORMED US SHE IS GOING TO MARRY, AND WE. .
RIGHT OUR ROLES.
...COME WITH CONGRATULATIONS!
I DANCE
WHAT'S THE SCENARIO THIS TIME?
YUAL

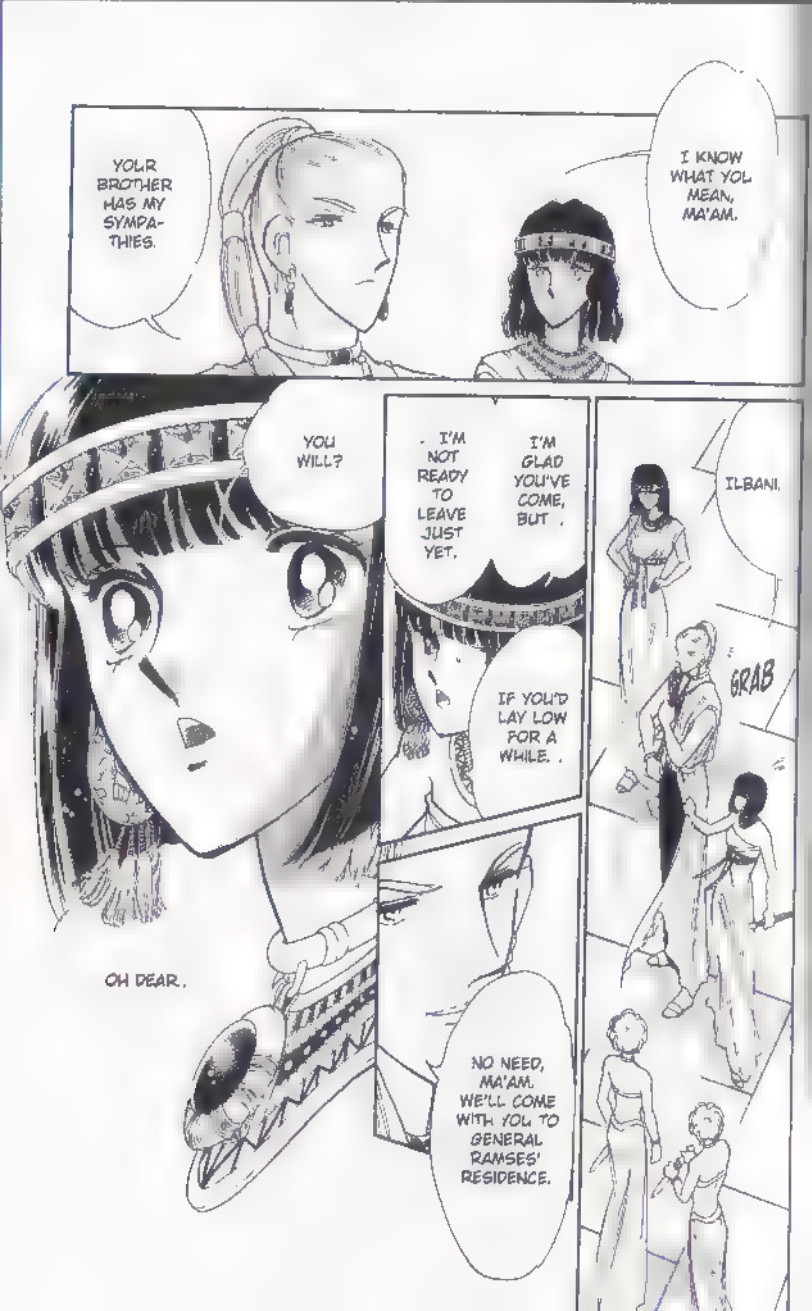

I DIDN'T MEAN TO HUMILIATE YOU.
HA HA HA HA...
WHERE IS YOUR HOMETOWN, BY THE WAY?
HOW DARE YOU?!
MY TEMPLE IS UNDER THE PROTECTION OF HER HIGHNESS NEFERTITI, AND YOU HAVE HUMILIATED ME!
GENERAL RAMSES' FIANCÉE OR NOT, YOU WILL PAY FOR THIS!

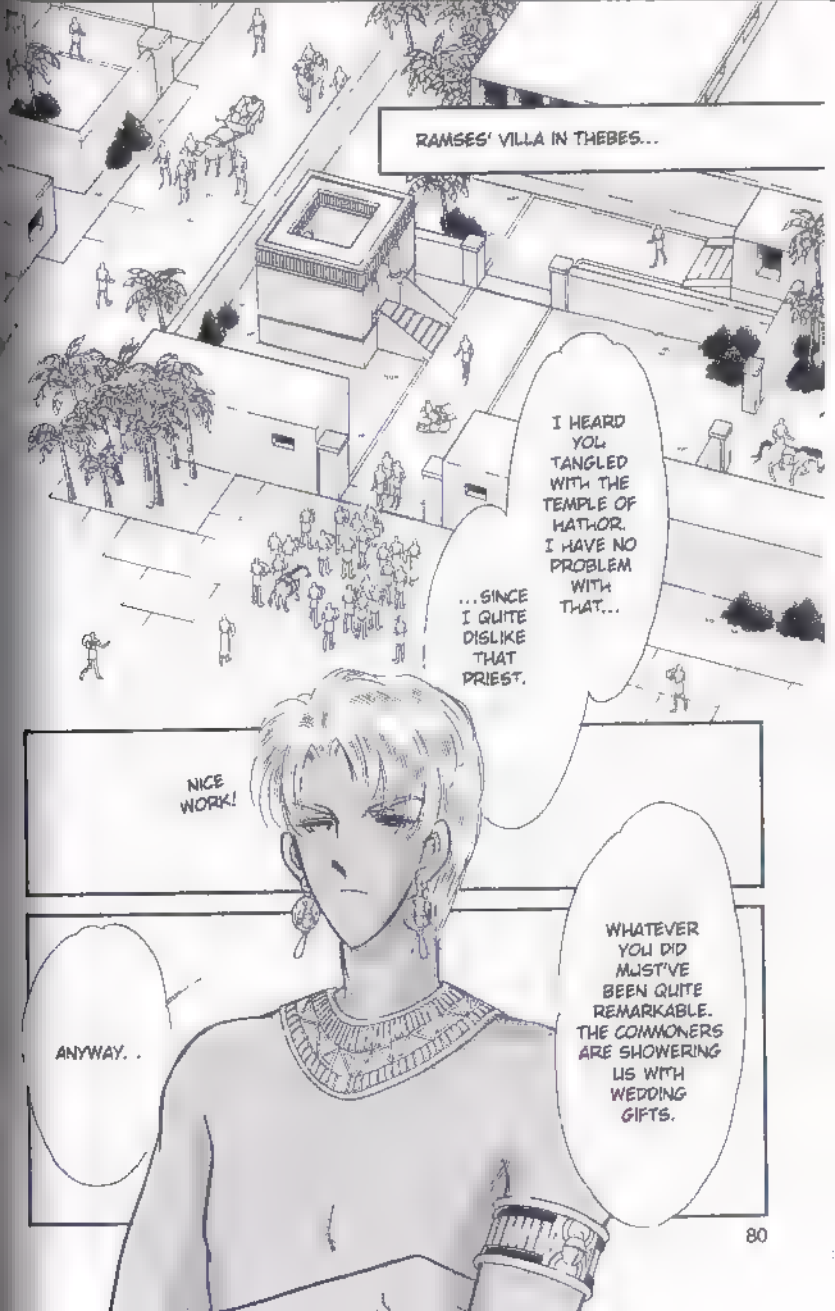

YOU... YOU DEFIANT GIRL...!
PLOK
WHO DID THAT?!
WHO THREW THAT STONE AT ME?!
BUT DO YOU HONESTLY BELIEVE YOU WOULD BE RESPECTED FOR WHAT YOU ALMOST DID? YOU'D ONLY BE HATED.

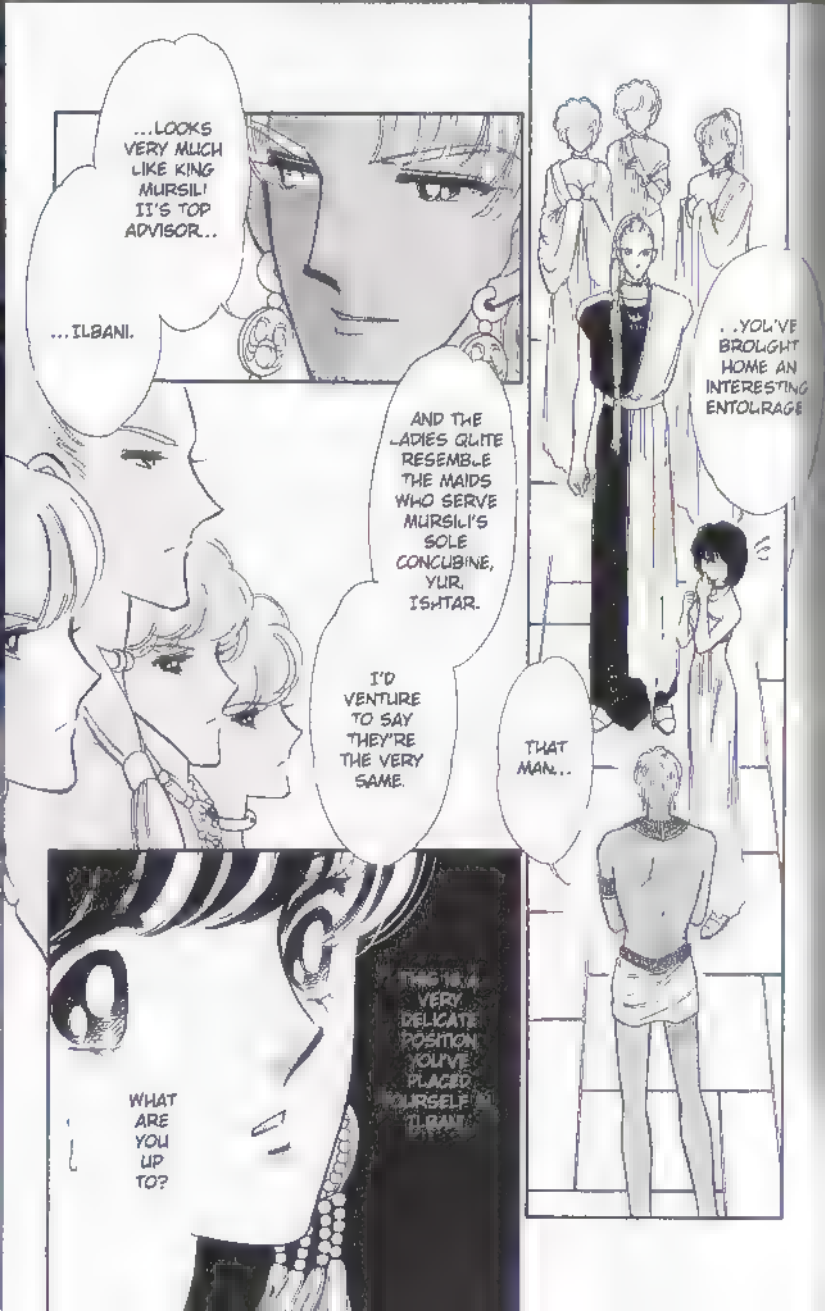
DID YOU DO IT?!
IF NOT, TELL ME WHO DID OR I'LL TAKE YOUR ARM!
THAT'S NOT FAIR, SIR!
HUSH
I'M ASKING WHO DID IT! ANSWER ME!
LEAVE HIM ALONE...
...IF YOU VALUE YOUR LIFE.
...FEEL MY BLADE?
OR WOULD YOU RATHER...

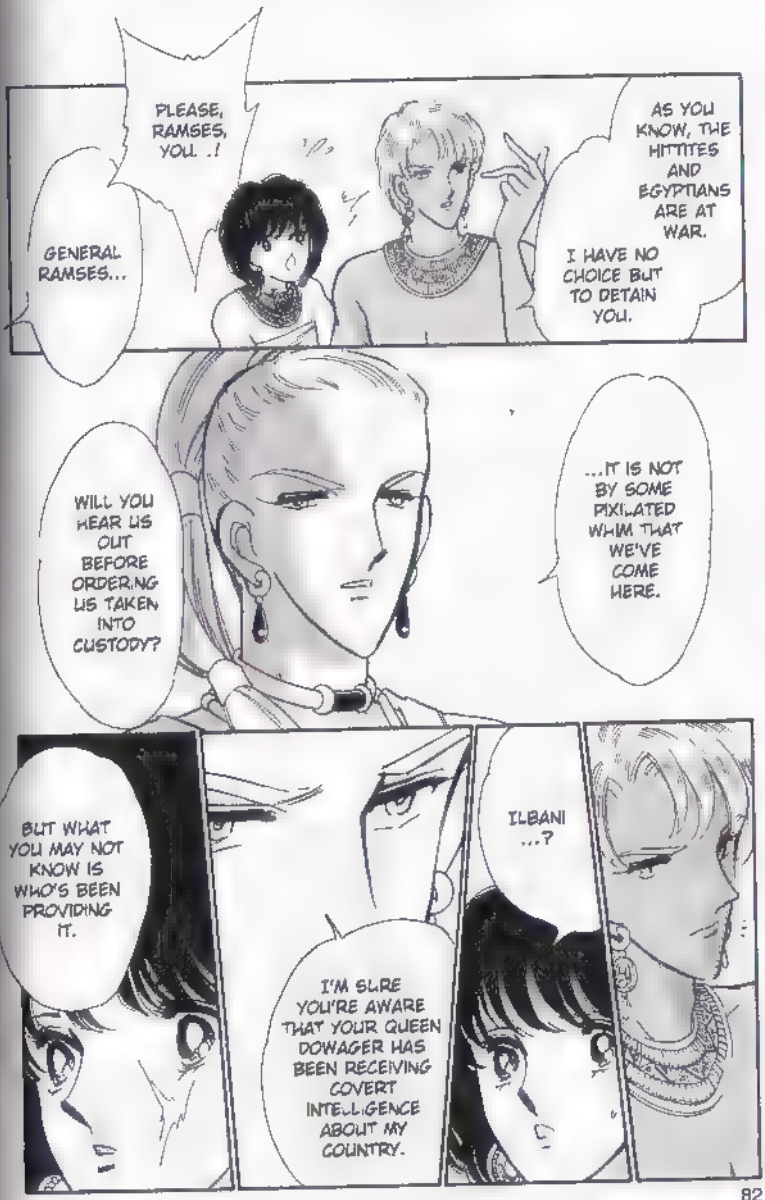

SHK
SHK
SHK
THIS IS UNFOR-GIVABLE!
EH?
YAAA!

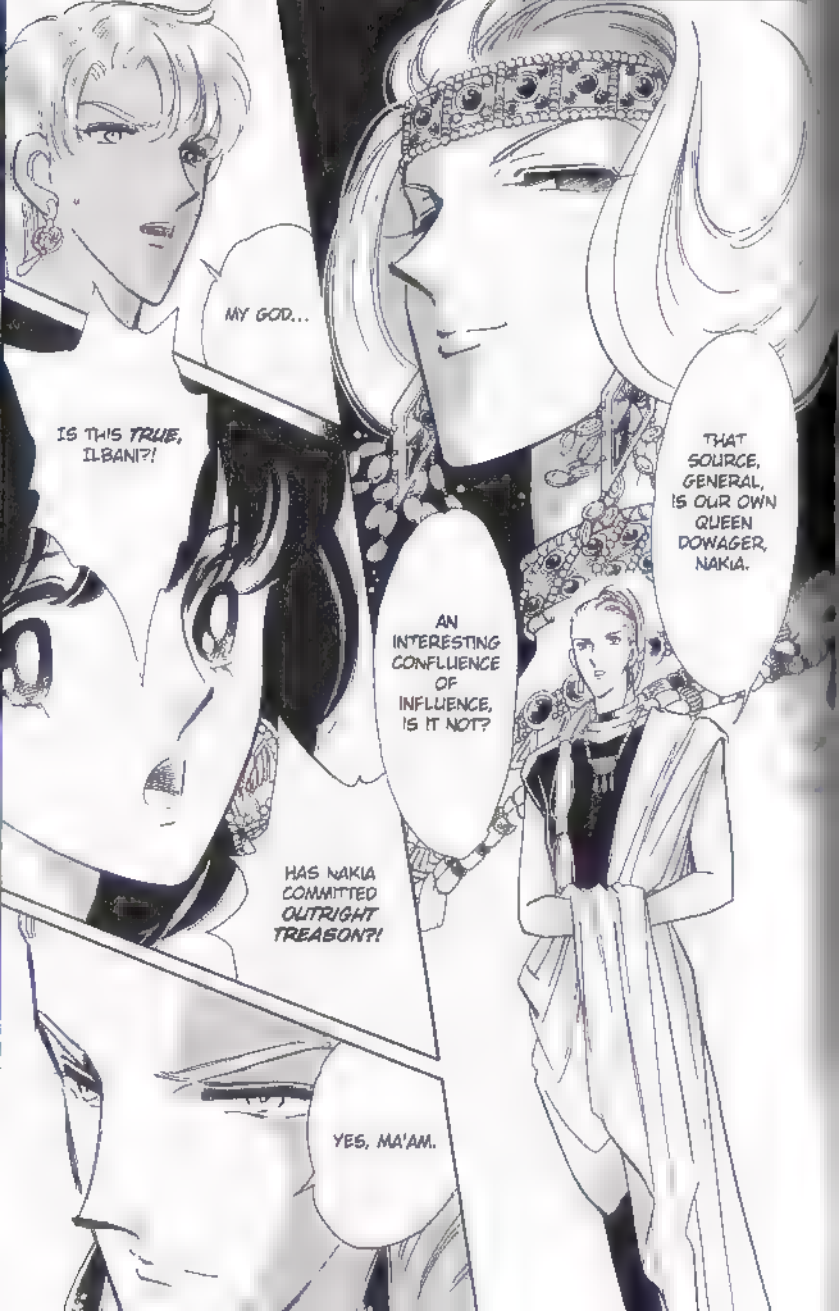
I SELL THESE, SO PLEASE ...
..ACCEPT THEM AS MY WEDDING GIFT
CONGRATU-LATIONS ON YOUR ENGAGEMENT TO GENERAL RAMSES!
THANK YOU AGAIN, PRINCESS!
CHEER CHEER CHEER
AH, RAMSES, YOU SURE KNOW HOW TO PICK 'EM!
SHE'S CONTRIBUTED MATERIALLY TO MY BROTHER'S POPULARITY. .
...BUT THIS WILL NOT SIT WELL WITH THE QUEEN DOWAGER AND HER LAPDOGS.

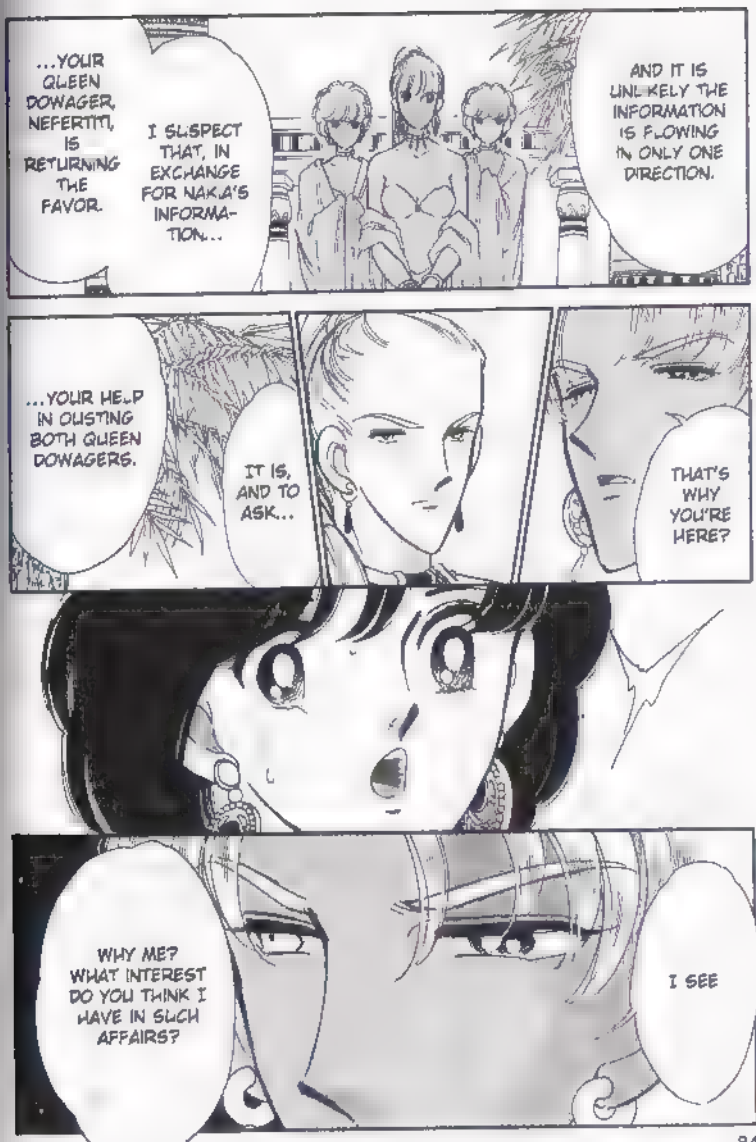

I KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN, MA'AM.
YOUR BROTHER HAS MY SYMPATHIES.
ILBANI.
GRAB
I'M GLAD YOU'VE COME, BUT . . I'M NOT READY TO LEAVE JUST YET.
IF YOU'D LAY LOW FOR A WHILE. .
YOU WILL?
OH DEAR.
NO NEED, MA'AM. WE'LL COME WITH YOU TO GENERAL RAMSES' RESIDENCE.

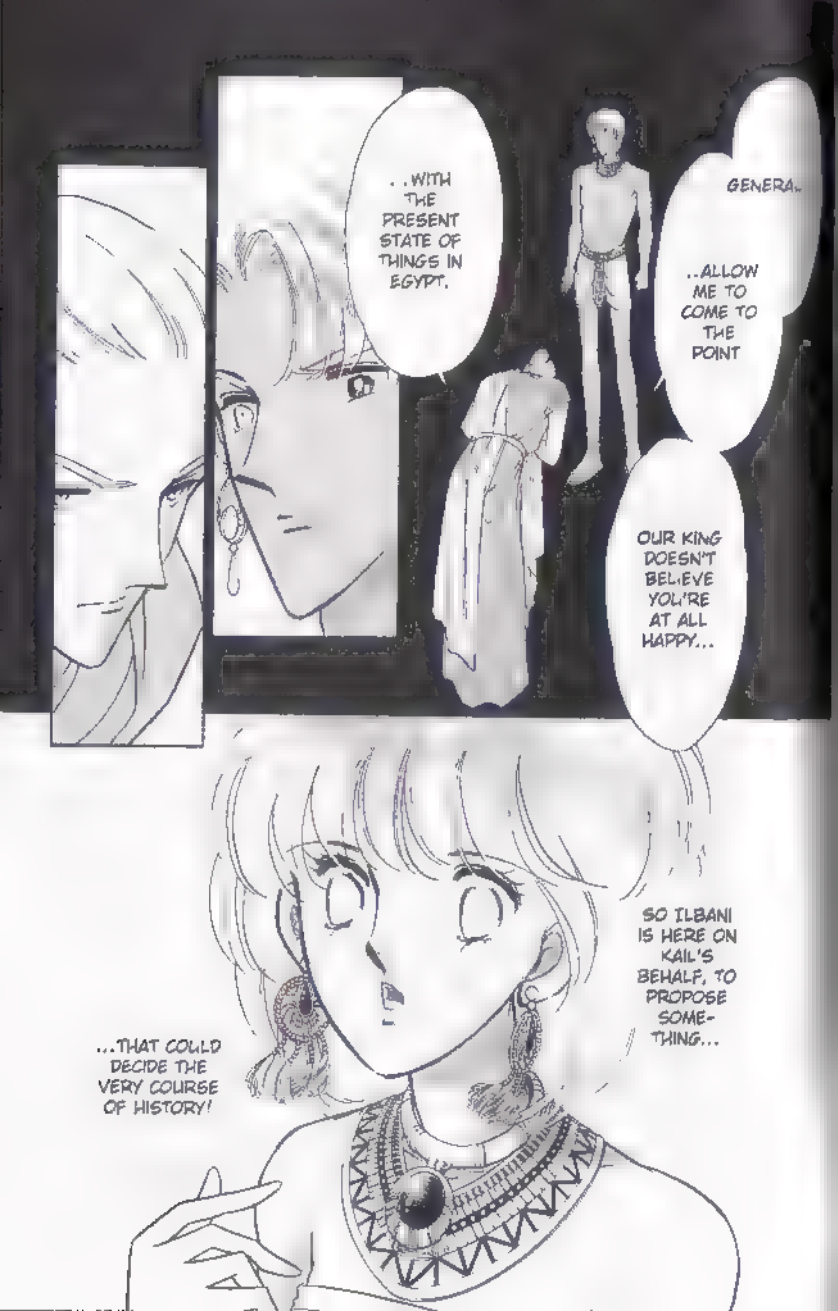

RAMSES' VILLA IN THEBES...
I HEARD YOU TANGLED WITH THE TEMPLE OF HATHOR. I HAVE NO PROBLEM WITH THAT...
...SINCE I QUITE DISLIKE THAT PRIEST.
NICE WORK!
WHATEVER YOU DID MUST'VE BEEN QUITE REMARKABLE. THE COMMONERS ARE SHOWERING US WITH WEDDING GIFTS.
ANYWAY. .


...LOOKS VERY MUCH LIKE KING MURSIL! II'S TOP ADVISOR..
...ILBANI.
AND THE LADIES QUITE RESEMBLE THE MAIDS WHO SERVE MURSILI'S SOLE CONCUBINE, YUR, ISHTAR.
I'D VENTURE TO SAY THEY'RE THE VERY SAME.
WHAT ARE YOU UP TO?
THIS IS A VERY DELICATE POSITION YOU'VE PLACED YOURSELF IN, ILBANI.
..YOU'VE BROUGHT HOME AN INTERESTING ENTOURAGE
THAT MAN..


PLEASE, RAMSES, YOU. .!
GENERAL RAMSES...
AS YOU KNOW, THE HITTITES AND EGYPTIANS ARE AT WAR.
I HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO DETAIN YOU.
WILL YOU HEAR US OUT BEFORE ORDERING US TAKEN INTO CUSTODY?
...IT IS NOT BY SOME PIXILATED WHIM THAT WE'VE COME HERE.
BUT WHAT YOU MAY NOT KNOW IS WHO'S BEEN PROVIDING IT.
I'M SURE YOU'RE AWARE THAT YOUR QUEEN DOWAGER HAS BEEN RECEIVING COVERT INTELLIGENCE ABOUT MY COUNTRY.
ILBANI ...?


MY GOD...
IS THIS TRUE, ILBANI?!
HAS NAKIA COMMITTED OUTRIGHT TREASON?!
YES, MA'AM.
AN INTERESTING CONFLUENCE OF INFLUENCE, IS IT NOT?
THAT SOURCE, GENERAL, IS OUR OWN QUEEN DOWAGER, NAKIA.

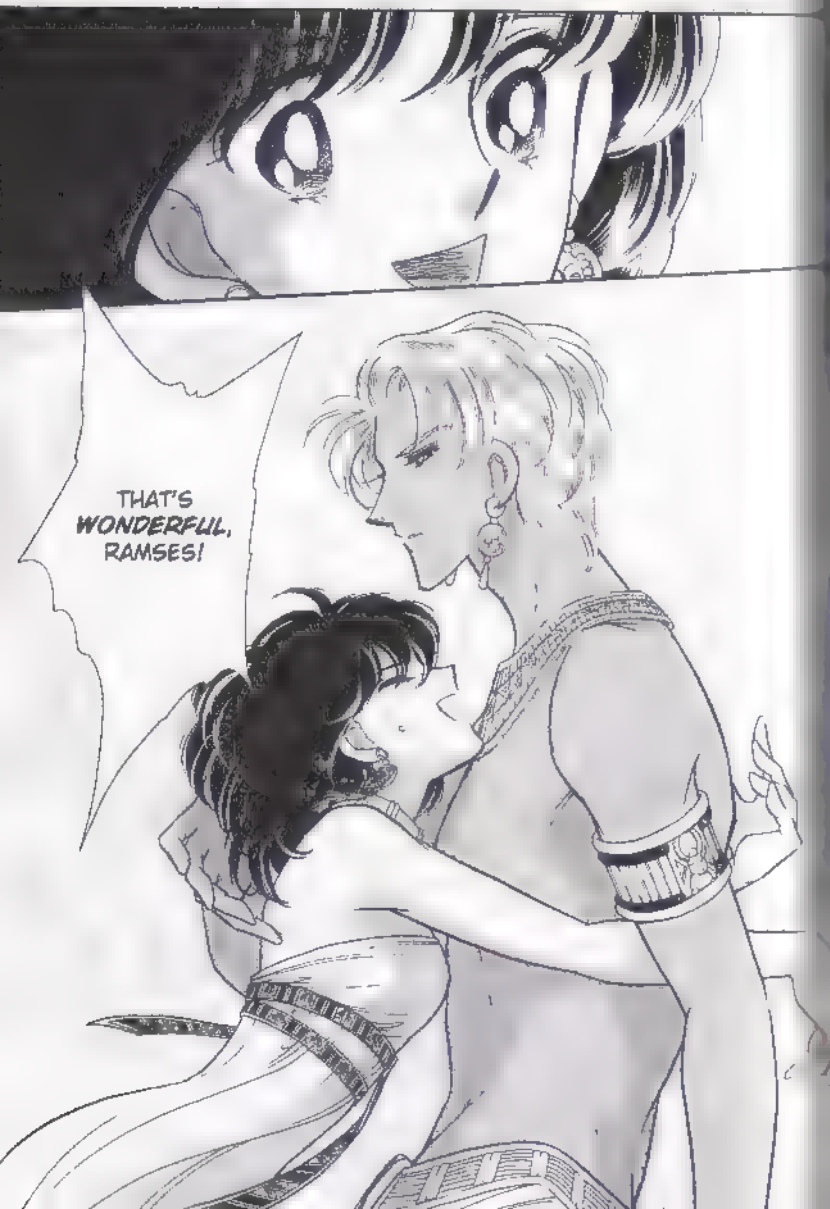

...YOUR QUEEN DOWAGER, NEFERTITI, IS RETURNING THE FAVOR.
I SUSPECT THAT, IN EXCHANGE FOR NAKA'S INFORMATION...
AND IT IS UNLIKELY THE INFORMATION IS FLOWING IN ONLY ONE DIRECTION.
...YOUR HELP IN OUSTING BOTH QUEEN DOWAGERS.
IT IS, AND TO ASK...
THAT'S WHY YOU'RE HERE?
WHY ME? WHAT INTEREST DO YOU THINK I HAVE IN SUCH AFFAIRS?
I SEE

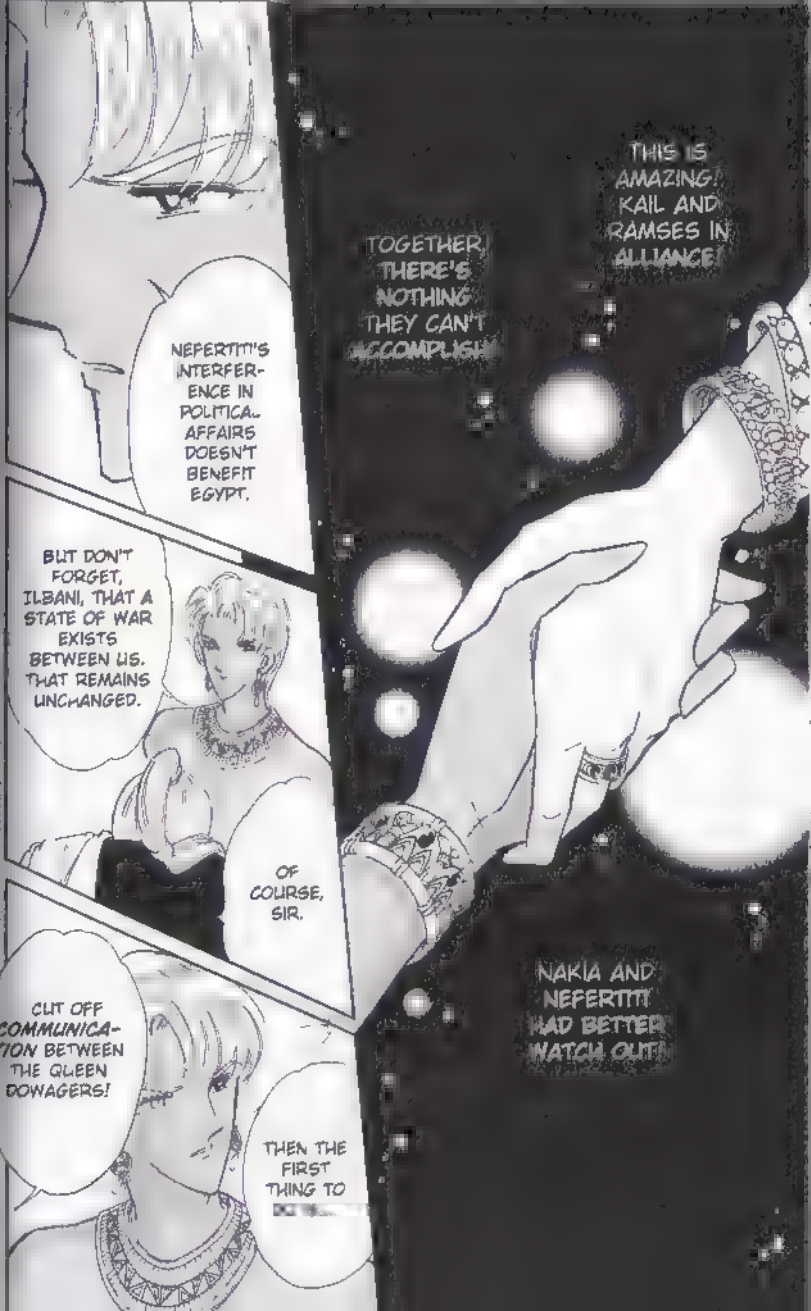

GENERAL...
..ALLOW ME TO COME TO THE POINT
OUR KING DOESN'T BELIEVE YOU'RE AT ALL HAPPY...
..WITH THE PRESENT STATE OF THINGS IN EGYPT.
SO ILBANI IS HERE ON KAIL'S BEHALF, TO PROPOSE SOMETHING...
...THAT COULD DECIDE THE VERY COURSE OF HISTORY!

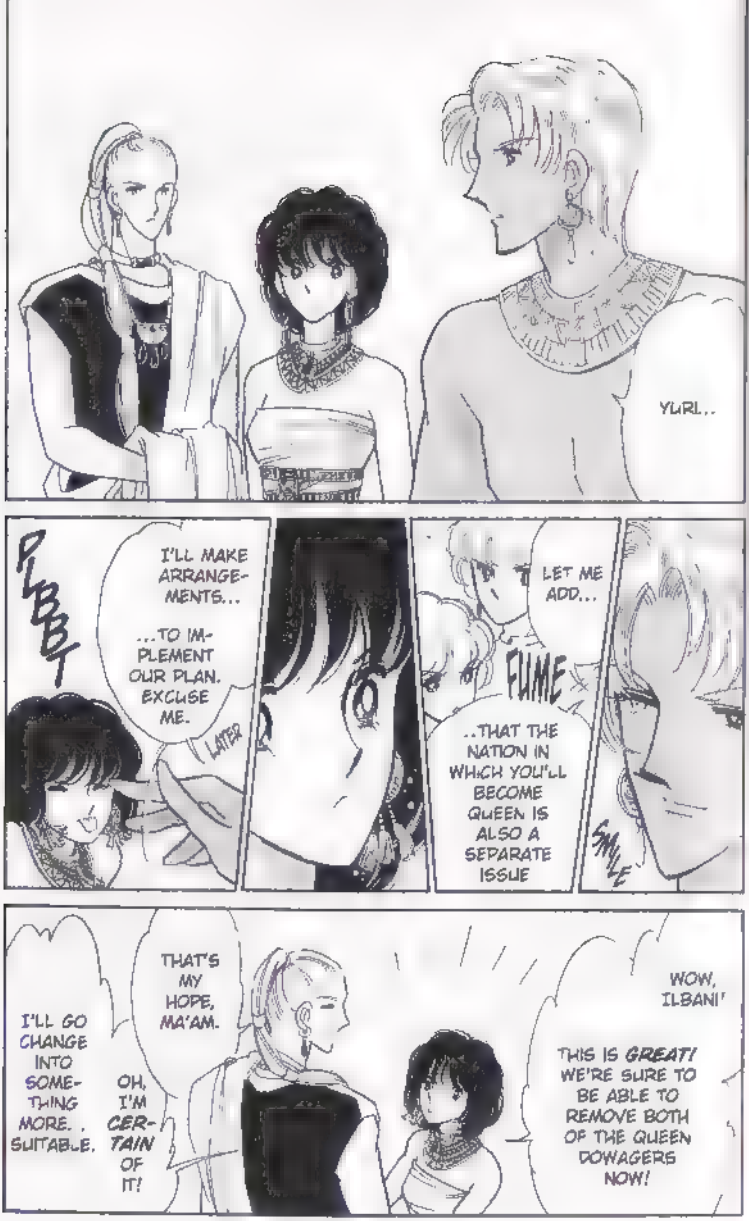
BA-BUMP
BA-BUMP
BA-BUMP
BA-BUMP

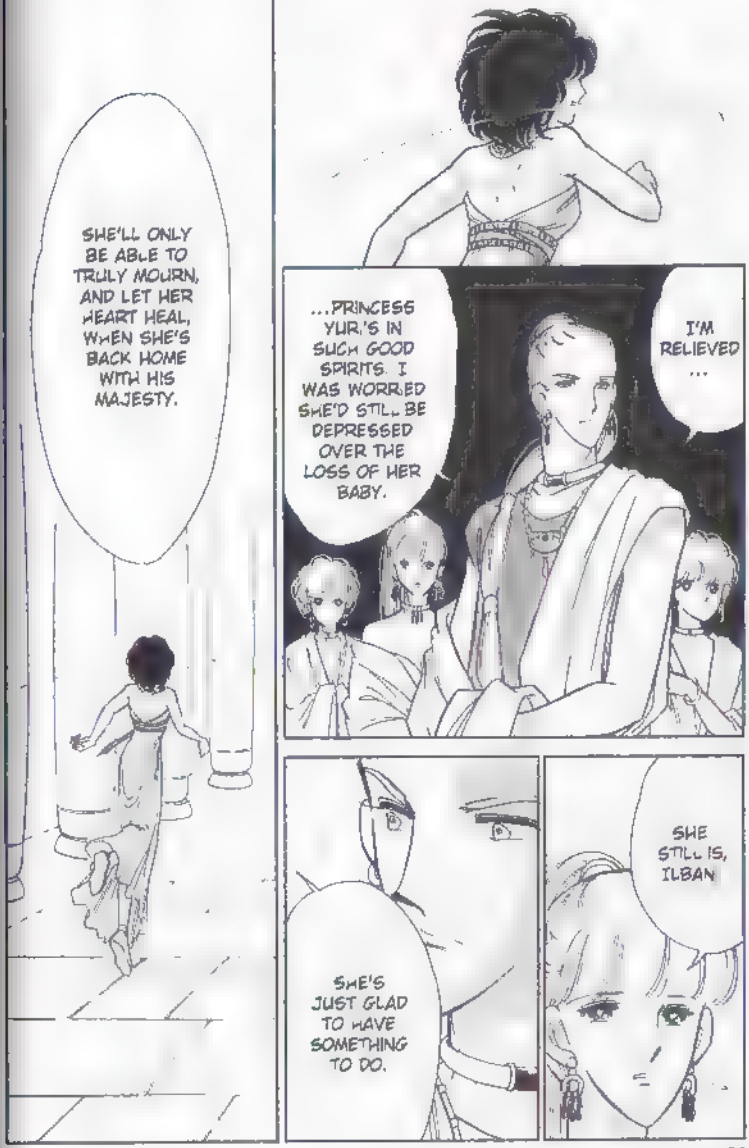
I NEVER IMAGINED THIS... KAIL AND RAMSES WORKING TOGETHER...
BA-BUMP
BA-BUMP
BA-BUMP
YOU THINK I'D CONSPIRE WITH OUR ENEMIES?
A SUPERB TACTICIAN. I ONLY ASK YOU TO READ THE SITUATION FOR YOURSELF.
SIR, YOU ARE.
YOU MUST BE BEHIND THIS PLAN, ILBAN!
DID YOU HAVE ANY TROUBLE PERSUADING MURSILI II?
SMILE
AND IT COULD WELL TURN, IN THIS MOMENT, ON RAMSES' DECISION!

...I WILL JOIN MURSILI II IN ADDRESSING THIS PARTICULAR MATTER.
ALL RIGHT...


THAT'S WONDERFUL, RAMSES!

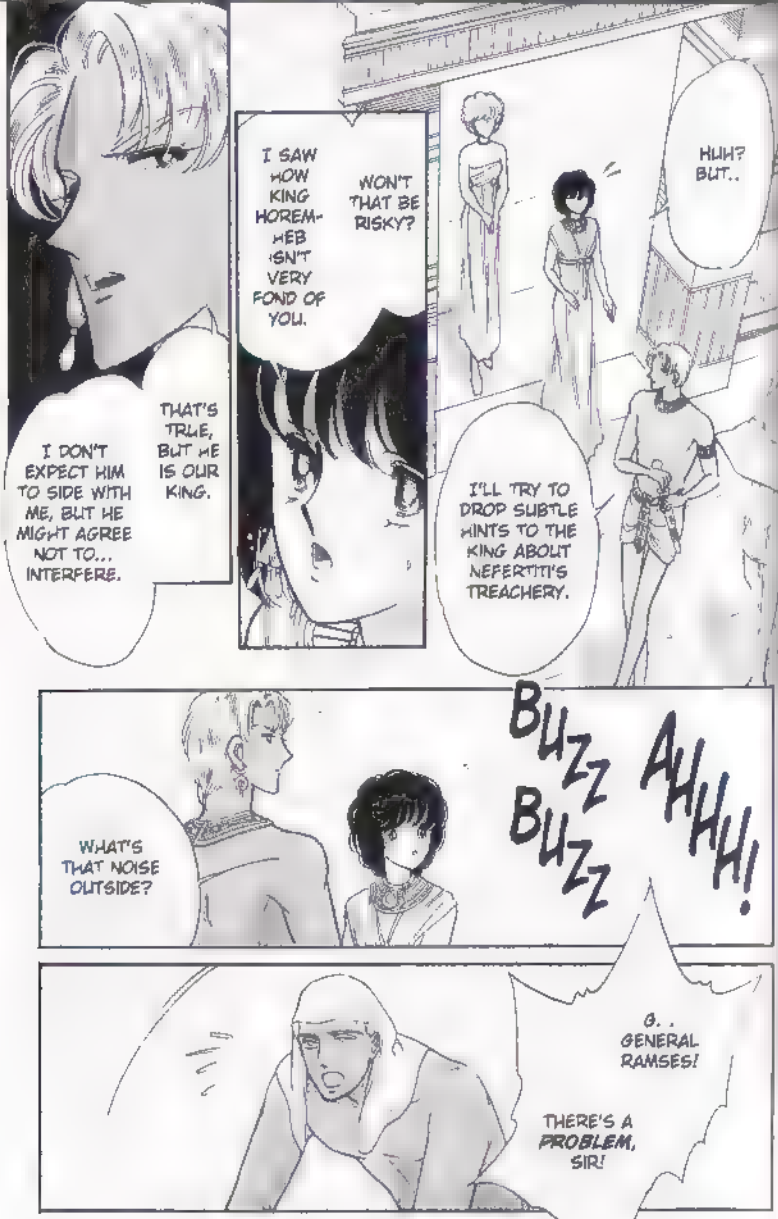

NEFERTITI'S INTERFERENCE IN POLITICAL AFFAIRS DOESN'T BENEFIT EGYPT.
BUT DON'T FORGET, ILBANI, THAT A STATE OF WAR EXISTS BETWEEN US. THAT REMAINS UNCHANGED.
OF COURSE, SIR.
CUT OFF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE QUEEN DOWAGERS!
THEN THE FIRST THING TO
TOGETHER, THERE'S NOTHING THEY CAN'T ACCOMPLISH!
THIS IS AMAZING! KAIL AND RAMSES IN ALLIANCE!
NAKIA AND NEFERTITI HAD BETTER WATCH OUT!

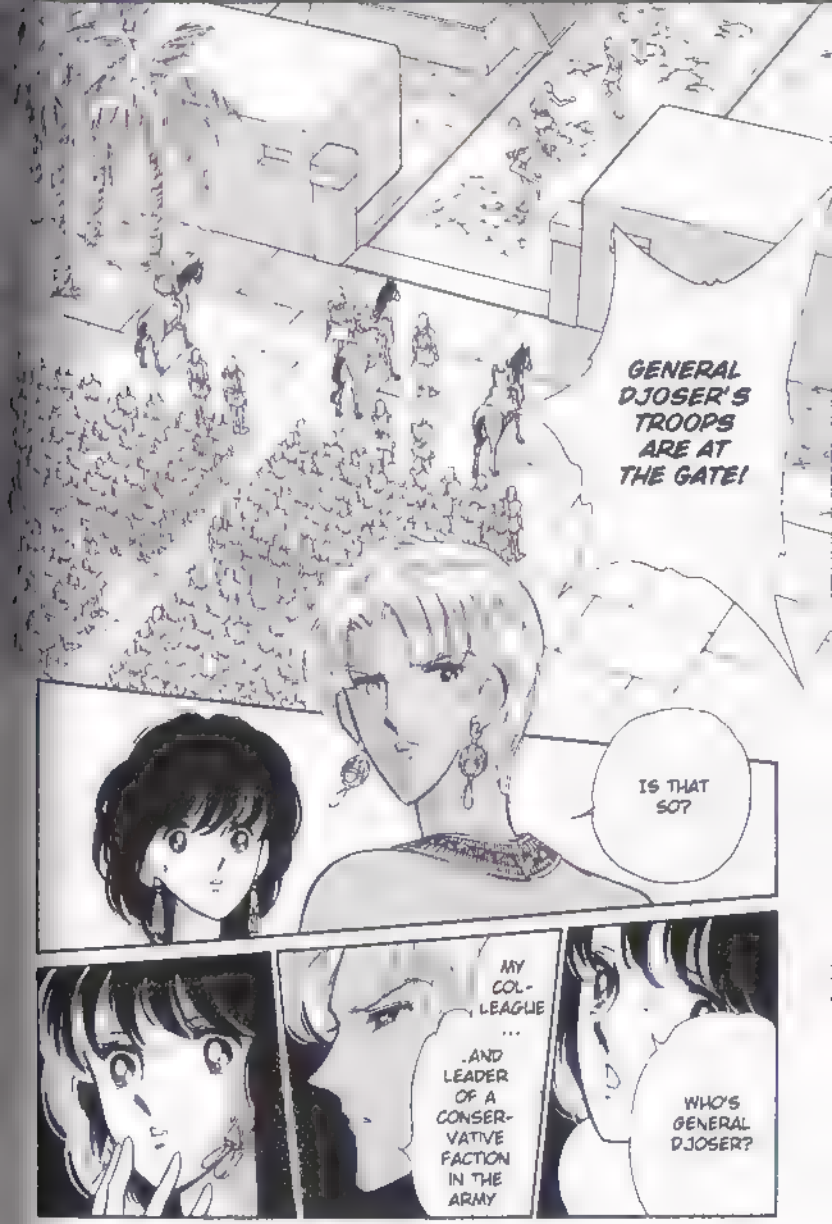

YURI...
I'LL MAKE ARRANGEMENTS...
...TO IMPLEMENT OUR PLAN. EXCUSE ME.
PBBT
LATER
LET ME ADD...
FUME
..THAT THE NATION IN WHICH YOU'LL BECOME QUEEN IS ALSO A SEPARATE ISSUE
SMILE
WOW, ILBANI!
THIS IS GREAT! WE'RE SURE TO BE ABLE TO REMOVE BOTH OF THE QUEEN DOWAGERS NOW!
THAT'S MY HOPE, MA'AM.
OH, I'M CERTAIN OF IT!
I'LL GO CHANGE INTO SOMETHING MORE.. SUITABLE.

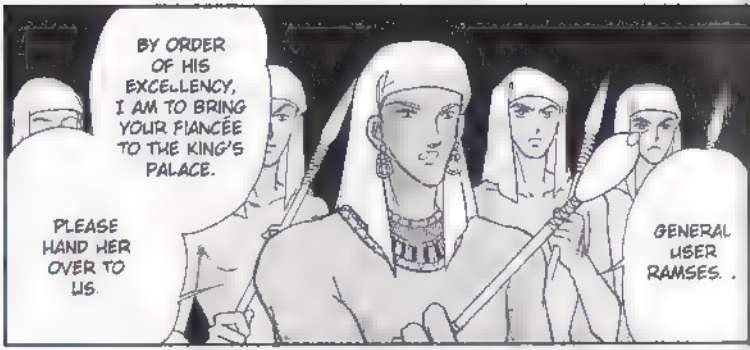

SHE'LL ONLY BE ABLE TO TRULY MOURN, AND LET HER HEART HEAL, WHEN SHE'S BACK HOME WITH HIS MAJESTY.
...PRINCESS YUR'S IN SUCH GOOD SPIRITS. I WAS WORRIED SHE'D STILL BE DEPRESSED OVER THE LOSS OF HER BABY.
I'M RELIEVED ...
SHE'S JUST GLAD TO HAVE SOMETHING TO DO.
SHE STILL IS, ILBAN

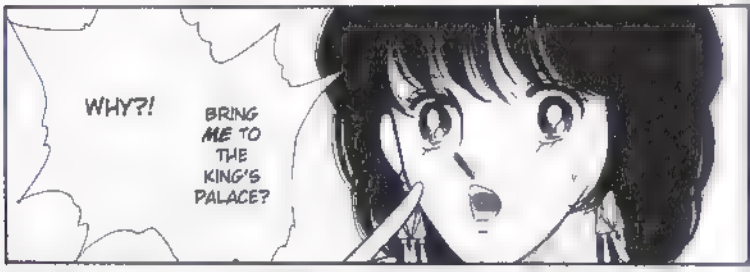
JUST AS HIS MAJESTY CAN SLEEP PEACEFULLY ONLY WHEN PRINCESS YURI IS BESIDE HIM..
..PRINCESS YURI WILL ONLY BE ABLE TO BRING OUT THE FULLNESS OF HER SORROW WHEN SHE IS WITH HIS MAJESTY.

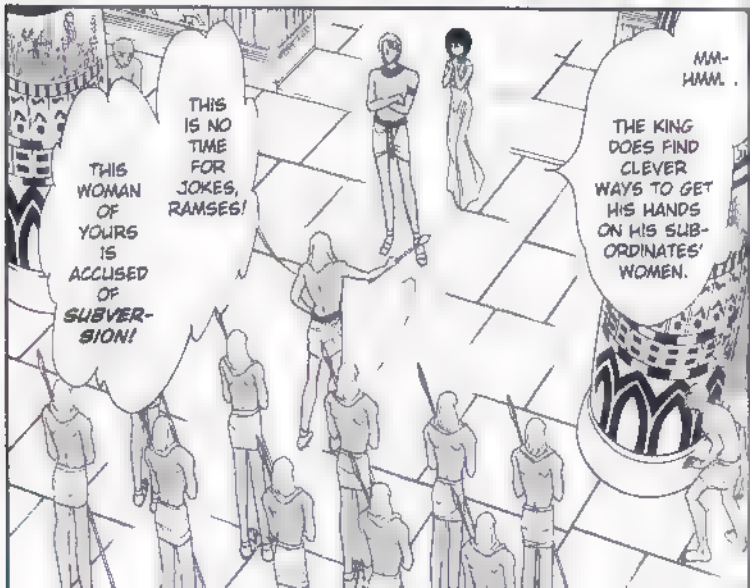
I'LL HELP RAMSES OBTAIN EVIDENCE OF NEFERTITI AND NAKIA'S TREASON...
AT LAST! SOMETHING I CAN DO FOR KAIL!
...WHICH WILL ENABLE KAIL TO OUST NAKIA!
I'M OFF TO THE KING'S PALACE.

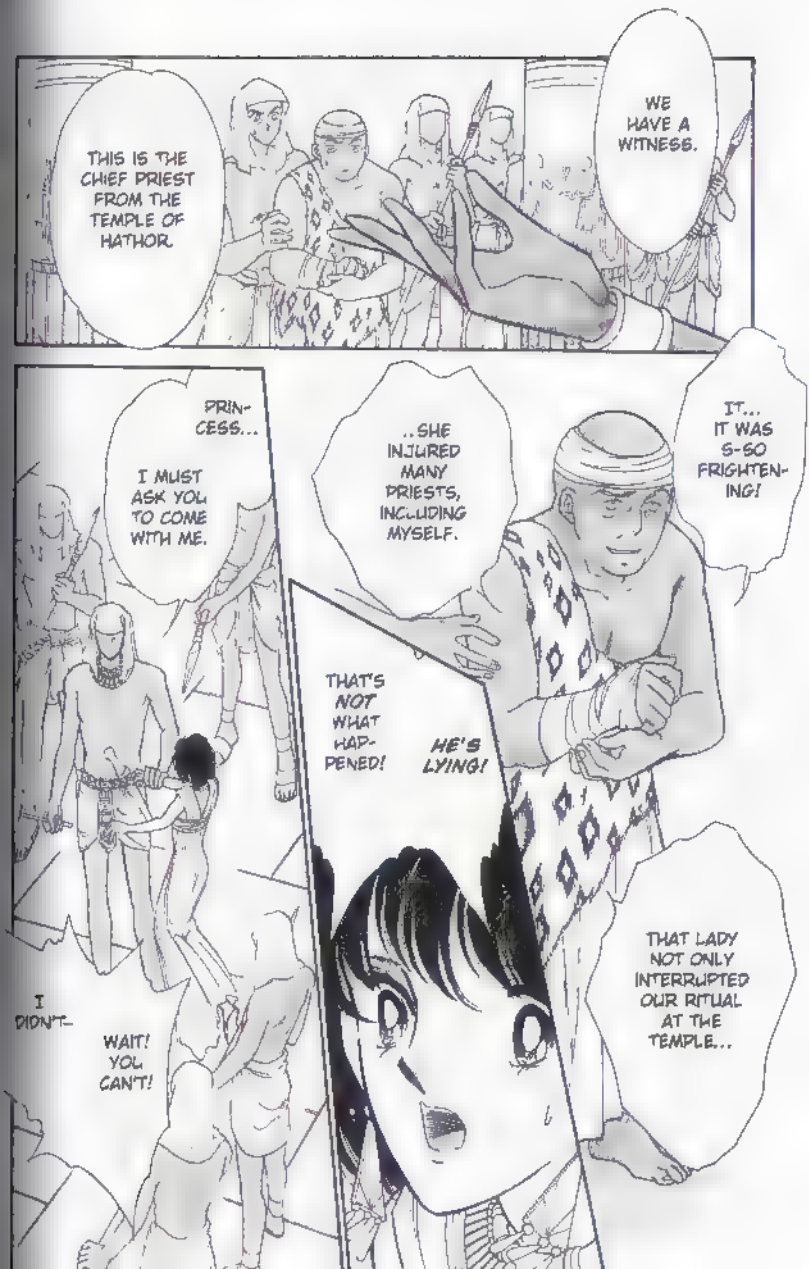

I DON'T EXPECT HIM TO SIDE WITH ME, BUT HE MIGHT AGREE NOT TO... INTERFERE.
THAT'S TRUE, BUT HE IS OUR KING.
I SAW HOW KING HOREM-HEB ISN'T VERY FOND OF YOU.
WON'T THAT BE RISKY?
I'LL TRY TO DROP SUBTLE HINTS TO THE KING ABOUT NEFERTITI'S TREACHERY.
HUH? BUT..
WHAT'S THAT NOISE OUTSIDE?
BUZZ BUZZ
AHHH!
G.. GENERAL RAMSES!
THERE'S A PROBLEM, SIR!

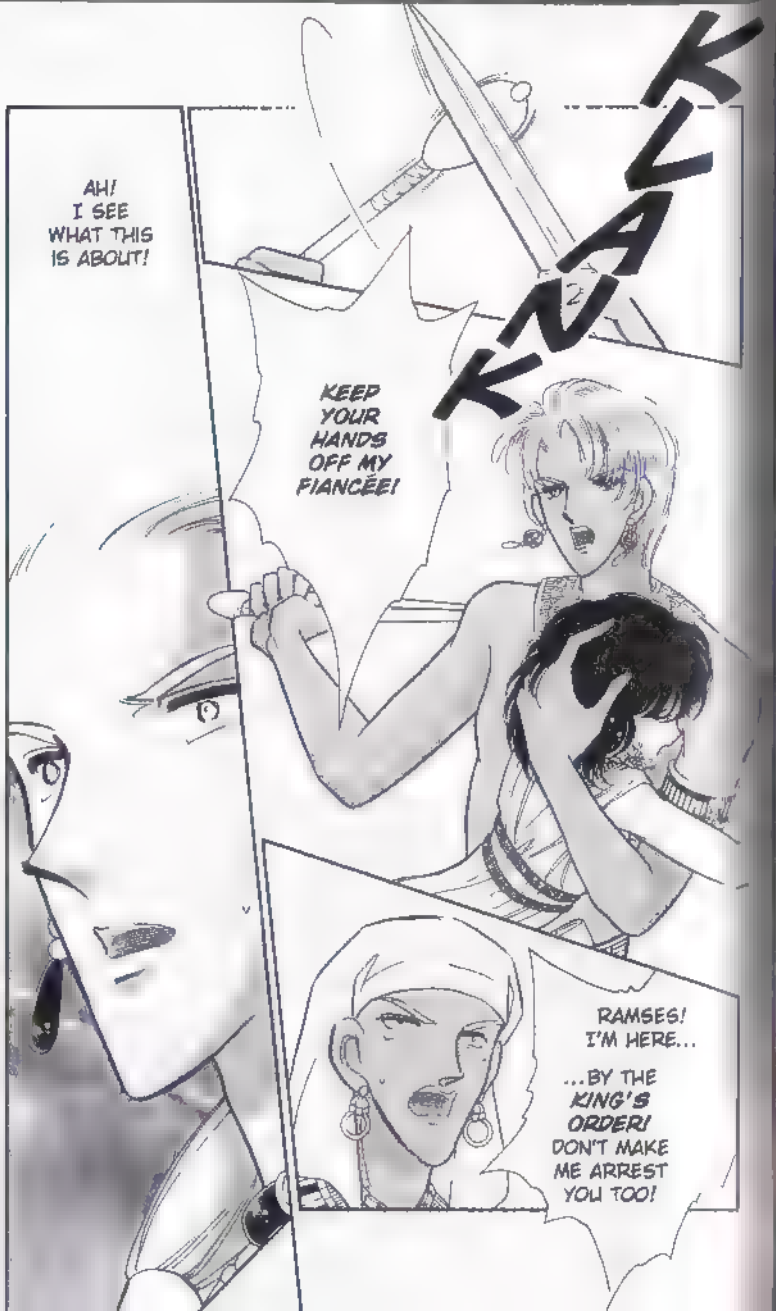

GENERAL DJOSER'S TROOPS ARE AT THE GATE!
IS THAT SO?
MY COL-LEAGUE ...
.AND LEADER OF A CONSER-VATIVE FACTION IN THE ARMY
WHO'S GENERAL DJOSER?

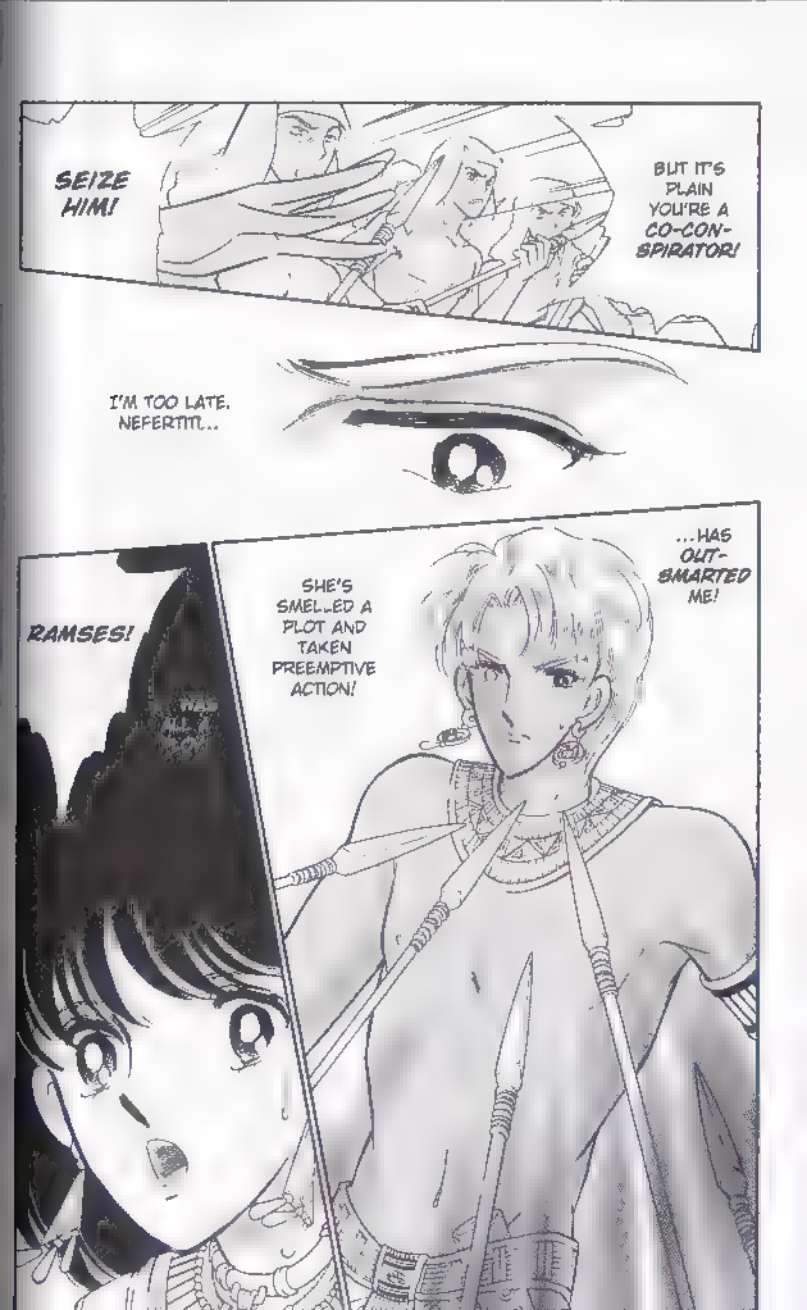

BY ORDER OF HIS EXCELLENCY, I AM TO BRING YOUR FIANCÉE TO THE KING'S PALACE.
PLEASE HAND HER OVER TO US.
GENERAL USER RAMSES. .


WHY?!
BRING *ME* TO THE KING'S PALACE?


THIS WOMAN OF YOURS IS ACCUSED OF *SUBVERSION!*
THIS IS NO TIME FOR JOKES, RAMSES!
MM-HMM. .
THE KING DOES FIND CLEVER WAYS TO GET HIS HANDS ON HIS SUBORDINATES' WOMEN.


THIS IS THE CHIEF PRIEST FROM THE TEMPLE OF HATHOR.
WE HAVE A WITNESS.
PRIN-CESS...
I MUST ASK YOU TO COME WITH ME.
..SHE INJURED MANY PRIESTS, INCLUDING MYSELF.
IT... IT WAS S-SO FRIGHTEN-ING!
THAT'S NOT WHAT HAP-PENED!
HE'S LYING!
THAT LADY NOT ONLY INTERRUPTED OUR RITUAL AT THE TEMPLE...
I DIDN'T-
WAIT! YOU CAN'T!


KNACK
AH! I SEE WHAT THIS IS ABOUT!
KEEP YOUR HANDS OFF MY FIANCÉE!
RAMSES! I'M HERE...
...BY THE KING'S ORDER! DON'T MAKE ME ARREST YOU TOO!


SEIZE HIM!
BUT IT'S PLAIN YOU'RE A CO-CONSPIRATOR!
I'M TOO LATE. NEFERTITI...
RAMSES!
SHE'S SMELLED A PLOT AND TAKEN PREEMPTIVE ACTION!
...HAS OUTSMARTED ME!

IT WASN'T REALLY ME THEY CAME FOR..
...IT WAS RAMSES! NEFERTITI *KNEW* HOW HE'D REACT!

YOU CAN'T ARREST RAMSES FOR WHAT I DID!
WAIT! I'M THE ONE ACCUSED OF A CRIME!
I'M THE ONE WHO THREATENED THAT PRIEST!

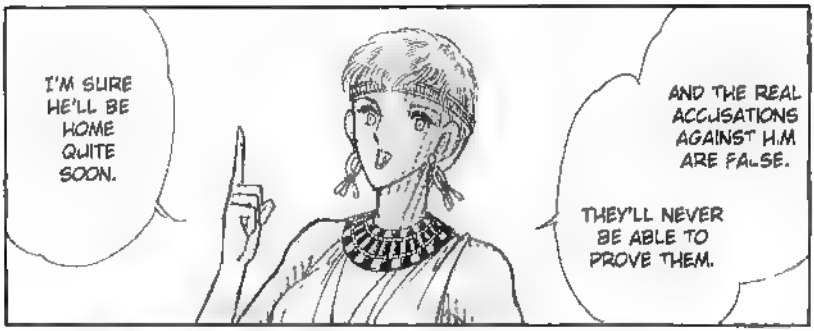
STOP IT, YURI.
YOU KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON HERE.
THE QUEEN DOWAGER HAS WANTED TO GET RID OF ME FOR SOME TIME.
IT'S SERVED ITS PURPOSE. THEY HAVE WHAT THEY WANT.
YOUR TROUBLE WITH THIS DOG OF A PRIEST IS A PRETEXT.
I'LL TESTIFY TO THE *FALSITY* OF YOUR ARREST!

HANDS OFF HER, I WARN YOU!
WATCH IT, DJOSER!
!!
YOU MAY DO SO LATER.
FOR NOW, PRINCESS, PLEASE STAND ASIDE.
SUCH AN ATTITUDE WILL SERVE YOU ILL, RAMSES.
YOUR RESIDENCE IS SURROUNDED BY MY TROOPS.
THE BULK OF YOUR ARMY IS IN MEMPHIS AT THIS TIME.
YOU CAN'T FIGHT US WITH JUST A HOUSEHOLD GUARD.

A WELL-PREPARED ARREST, I SEE.
WAIT!
TAKE RAMSES AND THE WOMAN AWAY.
MY HOUSEHOLD GUARD COULD HOLD YOU OFF FOR SOME TIME...
...BUT NEFERTITI JUST WANTS ME. LEAVE YURI AND HER FRIENDS ALONE AND I'LL GO QUIETLY.
RAMSES!
ALL RIGHT, I AGREE.
THIS IS MY FAULT!
I GAVE THEM THE EXCUSE THEY NEEDED TO ARREST RAMSES!
NOW WE'RE IN A REAL FIX!

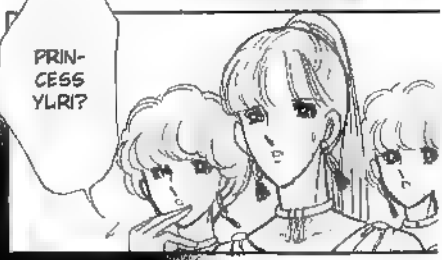
HUSH
WE MUST PREPARE FOR THE WORST.
THE QUEEN DOWAGER ISN'T LIKELY TO GO EASY.
THIS IS TERRIBLE! OUR MASTER'S BEEN ARRESTED!
WHAT WILL BECOME OF THE ESTATE?
MOTHER...
MY SON... WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO HIM...?
SHE'S NOT ONLY CAUSED HIS ARREST, BUT SHE'S DISGRACED THE ENTIRE FAMILY!
BROTHER RAMSES CERTAINLY CHOSE HIS FIANCÉE POORLY!

I ALWAYS THOUGHT THIS MARRIAGE TO A WOMAN FROM AN UNKNOWN FAMILY WAS A BAD IDEA.
YOU'RE QUITE RIGHT. I'D SAY...
AHEM!
DEAR SISTERS, THOUGH YOU ARE ALL MARRIED AND LIVE ELSEWHERE, I KNOW YOU VISIT US OUT OF CONCERN FOR YOUR FAMILY. IT IS MOST APPRECIATED.
BUT AS YOU CAN SEE, OUR FAMILY IS IN TROUBLE. I WOULD ASK THAT, FOR NOW, YOU REFRAIN FROM TAKING ANY JEWELRY, PLATE AND OTHER THINGS FROM THIS HOUSE.
EXCUSE US?
YURI, AS MY BROTHER TOLD YOU...
SO DON'T BLAME YOURSELF.
...HE WASN'T ARRESTED BECAUSE OF YOU.
NEFERT, I. .



NEFERT SEEMS OPTIMISTIC, BUT...

...I CAN'T HELP FEELING RAMSES HAS BEEN CAUGHT IN A VERY STRONG NET.



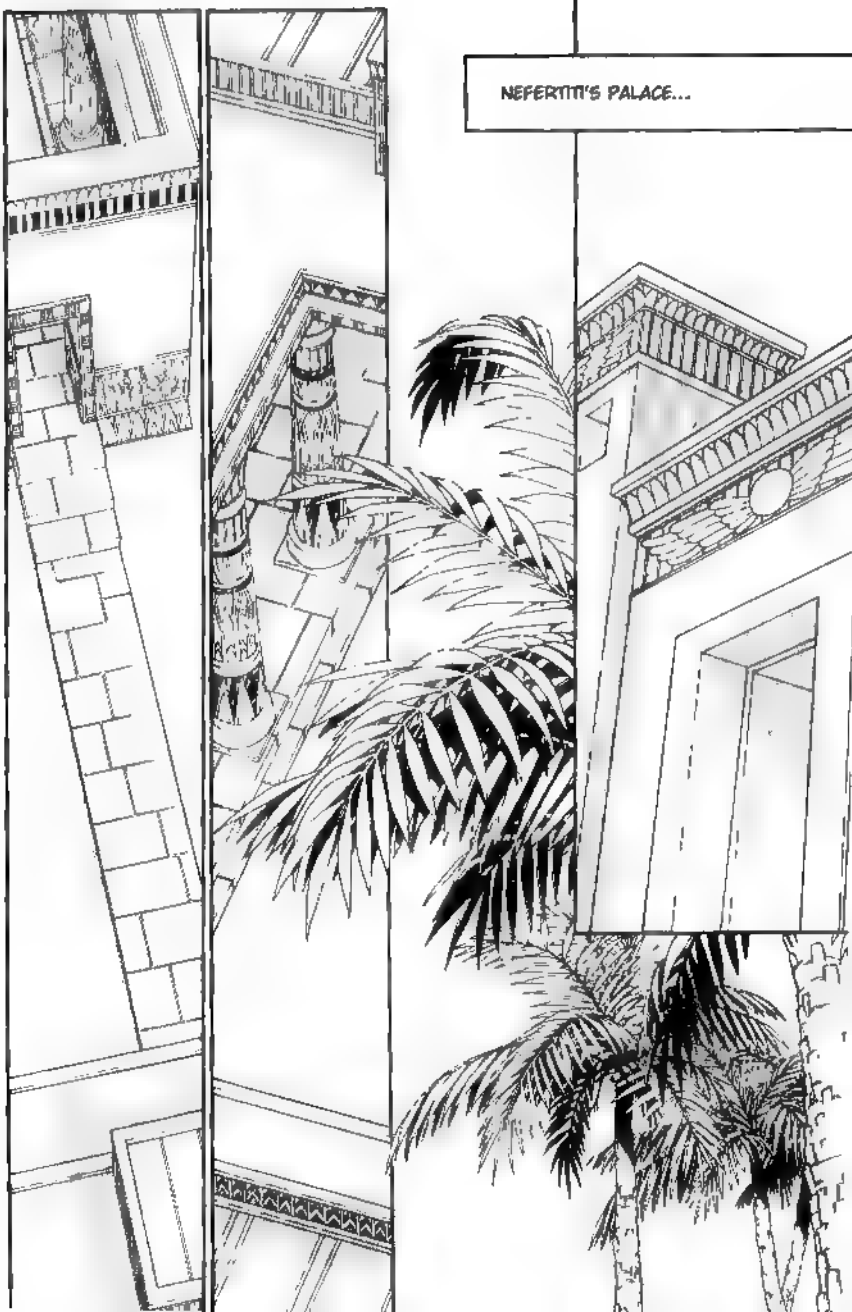
PRINCESS YURI!
WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
TO THE QUEEN DOWAGER'S PALACE!
I HAVE TO TESTIFY AGAINST THAT SLIMY PRIEST AND PERSUADE NEFERTITI SHE HAS NO GROUNDS TO HOLD RAMSES!
NO, PRINCESS YURI!
NEFERTITI WANTS RAMSES OUT OF THE WAY.
NOW THAT HE'S BEEN TAKEN TO HER PALACE, SHE'LL BE ABLE TO DO WHATEVER SHE WANTS WITH HIM!

PLEASE STAY HERE, I IMPLORE YOU.
BUT I CAN'T JUST SIT AROUND AND LET NEFERTITI HAVE HER WAY!
IT'S LIKELY YOU AND RAMSES WILL BOTH BE LOCKED UP.
BUT ILBANI, I CAN'T...
YOUR TESTIMONY WON'T CHANGE THE SITUATION.
I'M FED UP WITH GIVING IN TO QUEEN DOWAGERS!
BESIDES, RAMSES AGREED TO HELP US REMOVE NAKIA. WE CAN'T LEAVE HIM TO ROT!

I'M GOING TO NEFERTITI'S PALACE!
PRINCESS YURI!
I SUG-GEST...
...YOU TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO RETURN HOME WITH US.
WHAT?
OUR PRIMARY PURPOSE IN COMING TO EGYPT...
...WAS TO BRING YOU BACK. WE CAN NOW DO SO WITH EASE.
OUR COUNTRY, AND HIS MAJESTY, NEED YOU.

BUT...
...WE JUST AGREED WITH RAMSES TO WORK TOGETHER TO PROVE NAKIA AND NEFERTITI'S GUILT...
...SO WE CAN RID OURSELVES OF THEM!
WE'LL FIND SOME OTHER WAY.
RIGHT NOW, OUR PRIORITY IS TAKING YOU HOME.
THIS IS THE MOMENT TO GET YOU OUT OF EGYPT.
PLEASE, PRINCESS YURI.
HIS MAJESTY MISSES YOU SO MUCH!
AND I MISS HIM TERRIBLY, BUT...
RAMSES IS A GENERAL IN THE ARMY OF OUR ENEMY. AS FOR HIS CURRENT TROUBLE, THAT STEMS FROM...
...HIS ONGOING OPPOSITION TO NEFERTITI. SHE'S BEEN WAITING FOR AN EXCUSE TO POUNCE. THAT YOU PROVIDED IT IS PURELY INCIDENTAL.

PRINCESS YURI...
...IT REALLY WOULD BE BEST FOR YOU TO RETURN HOME.
ILBANI'S RIGHT, BUT I CAN'T LEAVE IT AT THAT!


NEFERTITI'S PALACE...

HOW ARE YOU FEELING...
...GENERAL RAMSES?
YOU'VE HAD NOTHING THE ENTIRE DAY.
YOU MUST BE HUNGRY AND THIRSTY.

ISN'T IT RATHER IRREGULAR THAT, AS I'M CHARGED WITH A CAPITAL CRIME...
...I'M BEING HELD HERE INSTEAD OF AT THE KING'S PALACE, YOUR HIGHNESS?
CONSIDER IT A PERSONAL FAVOR FROM ME TO YOU.
GLARE
GLARE
YOU HAVE A CHANCE TO PLEDGE YOUR LOYALTY TO ME.
IF YOU DO, I'LL BE HAPPY TO PLEAD FOR THE KING'S MERCY ON YOUR BEHALF.

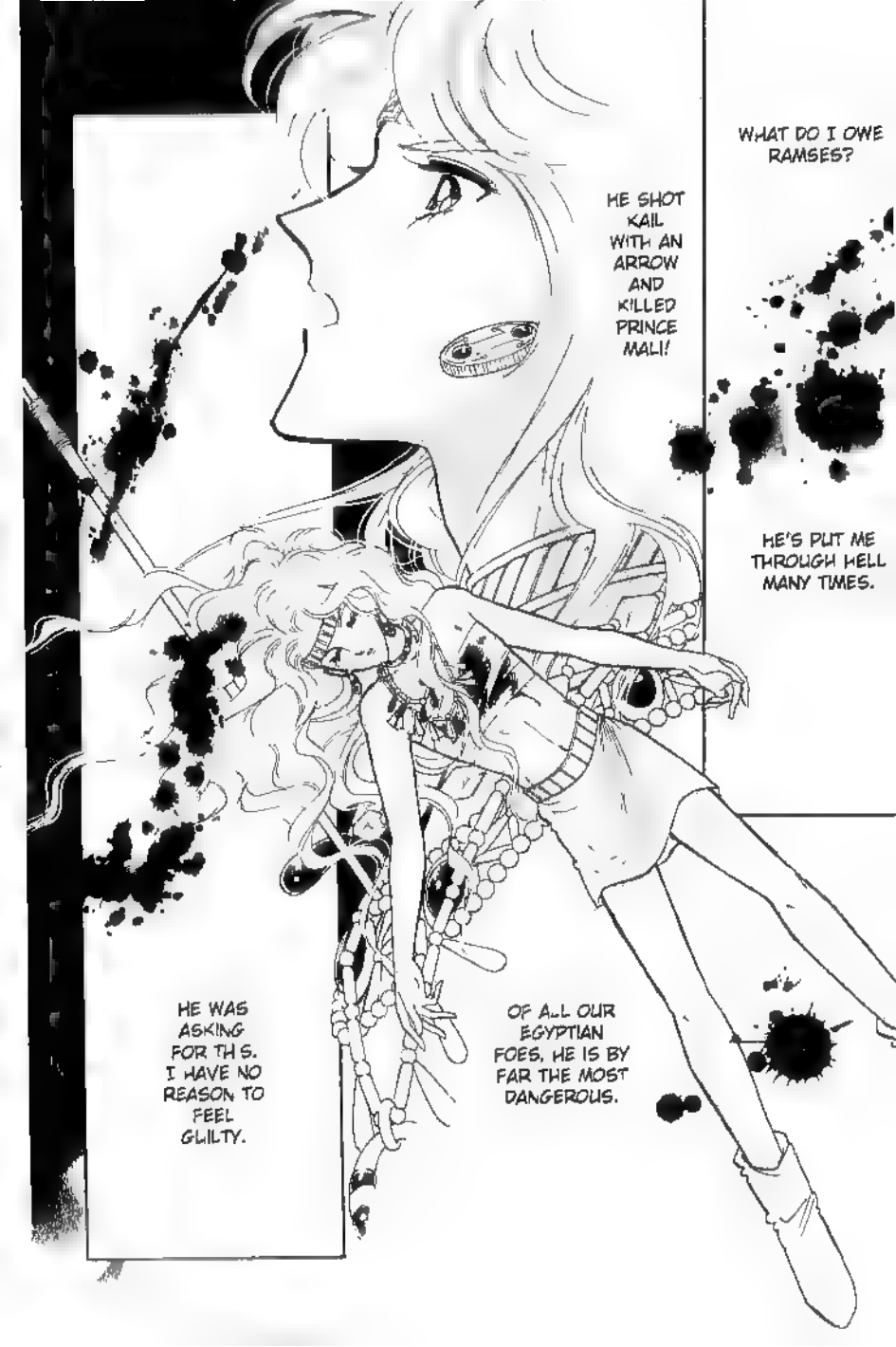
PLEDGE MY LOYALTY TO YOU?
EXCUSE ME, BUT I'M AN EGYPTIAN, NOT A PUPPY EAGER TO WAG HIS TAIL TO PLEASE A WHITE COBRA...
...WHO WOULD SINK HER FANGS INTO THE SOUL OF THE EGYPTIAN PEOPLE.
WHIP

TRICKLE
I ASSUME, THEN, THAT THERE IS NOTHING YOU NEED OR REQUEST FROM THIS WHITE COBRA.
YOU ARE FREE TO STAY HERE AS LONG AS YOU WISH.

BUT THE GENERAL WILL DIE IF HE'S LEFT LIKE THAT, YOUR HIGHNESS.
I THINK NOT.
YOUR HIGH-NESS. .
MAY I GIVE THE GENERAL SOME WATER?
WE'LL TELL THE KING THE GENERAL BROKE FREE AND WANDERED INTO THE DESERT.
I DON'T CARE.
IF HE DIES, YOU'LL BURY HIM.
YOUR HIGH-NESS...
DON'T FORGET ...
...I'M ONLY CONDUCTING AN INTERROGATION.
RAMSES!
HOW I'VE WAITED FOR THIS DAY!

HOREMHEB IS EASY TO MANIPULATE, BUT NOT GENERAL RAMSES!
AS LONG AS HE IS ALIVE, I CAN NEVER TRULY RULE EGYPT.
NOW I CAN DISPOSE OF HIM!

WHEN THE MOON RISES OVER THE PEAK ON THE WEST BANK.
SIR, MAY I ASK...
...WHEN THE BOAT'S LEAVING?
KEEP MOVING, PLEASE.
AFTER WE TRANSIT THE RIVER WE'LL TRANSFER TO A SEAGOING VESSEL.
A BOAT IS WAITING TO TAKE US DOWN THE NILE.
REALLY? THEN WE'D BETTER HURRY.
NEFERTITI... SHE'S BEEN WAITING FOR AN EXCUSE... THAT YOU PROVIDED IT IS... INCIDENTAL.
RAMSES IS A GENERAL IN THE ARMY OF OUR ENEMY.


HE SHOT KAIL WITH AN ARROW AND KILLED PRINCE MALI!
WHAT DO I OWE RAMSES?
HE'S PUT ME THROUGH HELL MANY TIMES.
HE WAS ASKING FOR TH S. I HAVE NO REASON TO FEEL GUILTY.
OF A..L OUR EGYPTIAN FOES, HE IS BY FAR THE MOST DANGEROUS.

PRIN-
CESS
YURI...
...COULD
YOU HURRY,
PLEASE?
THEY'RE
LATE.
ARE YOU
SURE
THEY'RE
COMING?
YEP.
THEY
PAID A
DEPOSIT.
SO WE
CAN
AFFORD
TO BE
PATIENT.

NO ONE ELSE I KNOW HAS SUCH A VISION... EXCEPT KAL.
A NATION IS NOT JUST ITS ARISTOC-RACY.
EVERY CITIZEN SHOULD BE ABLE TO LEAD A FULFILLING LIFE.
THAT IS WHY I SEEK THE EGYPTIAN THRONE!

PRINCESS YURI?
RAMSES CANNOT BE LEFT TO THIS HORRIBLE FATE!
RAMSES HAS BEEN BOTH MY NEMESIS AND MY SAVIOR.
HE AND KAIL ARE ENEMIES, YET EACH OPENS HIS HEART TO THE COMMON PEOPLE.

HEY, IT'S TIME TO GO.
YOU'RE RIGHT. IT'S THEIR OWN FAULT THEY'RE LATE.
LET'S JUST SAY THEY FORFEITED THEIR DEPOSIT. HEH HEH...
PRINCESS YURI?

I'M SORRY, BUT...
...I CAN'T RETURN HOME JUST YET. I MUST...
...I MUST RESCUE GENERAL RAMSES!

PRINCESS YURI..
IT IS HIS MAJESTY'S WISH THAT YOU RETURN WITH US...
...BUT YOU WOULD STAY... FOR HIS ENEMY?
I KNOW, I KNOW... IT SOUNDS CRAZY!

BELIEVE ME, I'M GENUINELY *TORN* HERE! THE THING IS...
...WHILE HIS MAJESTY HAS MANY SCORES TO SETTLE WITH RAMSES, WOULD HE WANT HIM...
...MURDERED IN COLD BLOOD, AT THE HANDS OF *ANOTHER* TRAITOROUS QUEEN DOWAGER?

ILBANI ...?
I AM SORRY YOUR RESCUE EFFORT WAS IN VAIN.
THANK YOU, ILBANI!
I SEE WE WON'T CHANGE YOUR MIND.
WE'RE TOO LATE TO CATCH THE BOAT ANYWAY.
CLUTCH
PRINCESS YURI!
YES! THAT'S WHERE RAMSES IS BEING HELD.
DO YOU INTEND TO GO STRAIGHT TO NEFERTITI'S PALACE FROM HERE?

ILBANI, SAY SOMETHING!
WE HAVE NO OTHER OPTION!
IT S UNLIKELY...
...THE FOUR OF US COULD RESCUE RAMSES ALONE, PRINCESS YURI.
PERHAPS, BUT WE MIGHT CONSIDER..
...CREATING A SITUATION WHICH WOULD COMPEL NEFERTITI TO RELEASE HIM.
HUH? LIKE WHAT?

WELL, YES...
...YOU MUST HAVE SOMETHING IN MIND.
ILBANI...
I THOUGHT EVENTS MIGHT TAKE THIS TURN, SO I'VE GIVEN SOME THOUGHT TO IT.
HUG
I WISH TO STATE THAT I'M JOINING THIS RESCUE MISSION UNDER PROTEST, MA'AM.
ILBANI! ♡
WHAT'S YOUR PLAN?
SO NOTED. NOW SPILL IT!

GENERAL RAMSES IS EGYPT'S MOST RENOWNED AND CAPABLE MILITARY COMMANDER.
A SITUATION COULD ARISE THAT WOULD MAKE HIS RELEASE AND RETURN TO SERVICE IMPERATIVE TO THE PRESERVATION OF THE CURRENT REGIME.
SUCH AS...?
...SINCE THEY'RE AT WAR WITH THE HITTITE EMPIRE. ONLY RAMSES' MILITARY PROWESS CAN MATCH KAIL'S!
EGYPT IS ALREADY IN DESPERATE NEED OF HIM...
THE KING IS AN *UTTER FOOL* TO LET NEFERTITI TAKE HIM OUT OF ACTION!

THAT IS SO, BUT...
...THE FRONT LINES ARE FAR AWAY. THE NEED FOR LEADERSHIP THERE IS NOT KEENLY FELT HERE.
?!
THEN WHAT DO YOU SUGGEST WE DO?
WE NEED TO FOMENT A CRISIS THAT WILL BEAR DIRECTLY ON THE PEOPLE OF THEBES.
IN OTHER WORDS, WE NEED TO STIR UP A REBELLION.

A REBEL-LION?!
I PRESUME YOU'VE THOUGHT THAT OUT, TOO?
YES, MA'AM.
THEBES
TO THE SOUTH OF THEBES ..
FOR THE PAST FEW YEARS THERE HAVE BEEN RIOTS IN ELEPHANTINE OVER FOOD SHORTAGES AND FRUSTRATION WITH THE REPRESSIVE GOVERN-MENT.
THE TOWN IS RIFE WITH UNREST THE TINDER IS READY, ALL THAT'S NEEDED IS A SPARK TO IGNITE THE INFERNO.
ELEPHANTINE
NUBIA
...IT IS A TOWN CALLED ELEPHANTINE NEAR THE BORDER WITH NUBIA.
A SPARK?

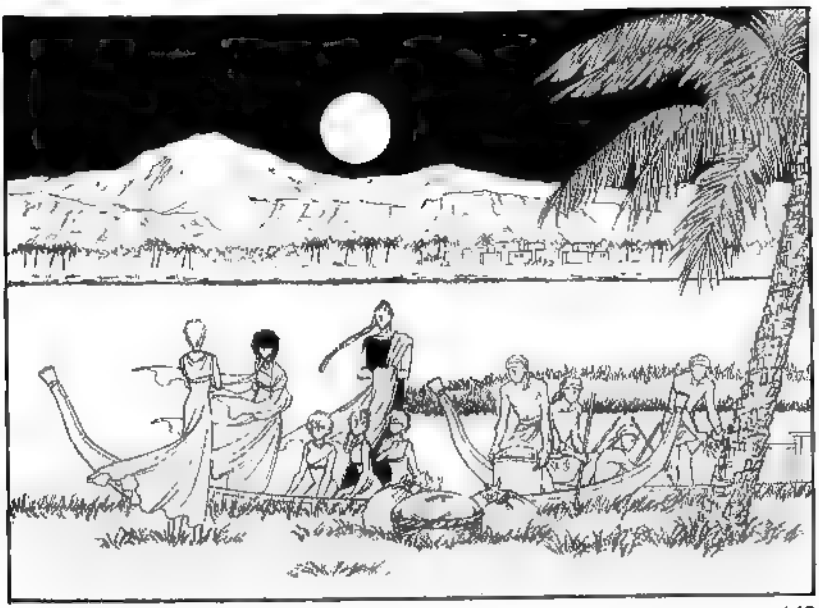
RIOTS BY LEADERLESS MOBS ARE NOT THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY OF OVER-TURNING AUTHORITY.
BUT IF THOSE MOBS CAME UNDER THE DIRECTION OF A CAPABLE LEADER..
AH... I SEE.
IT MUST BE SOMEONE CHARISMATIC ENOUGH TO WIN THE PEOPLE'S CONFIDENCE.
EXPERIENCE AS A MILITARY COMMANDER WOULD ALSO HELP.
BUT HOW ARE WE GONNA FIND SUCH A PERSON?
STARE
YOU MEAN ME?!
WHO ELSE?

YOU SEE THE POSSIBILITIES IN THE MOST OUTRAGEOUS NOTIONS.
THIS S WHY HIS MAJESTY VALLES YOU SO MUCH, ILBANI.

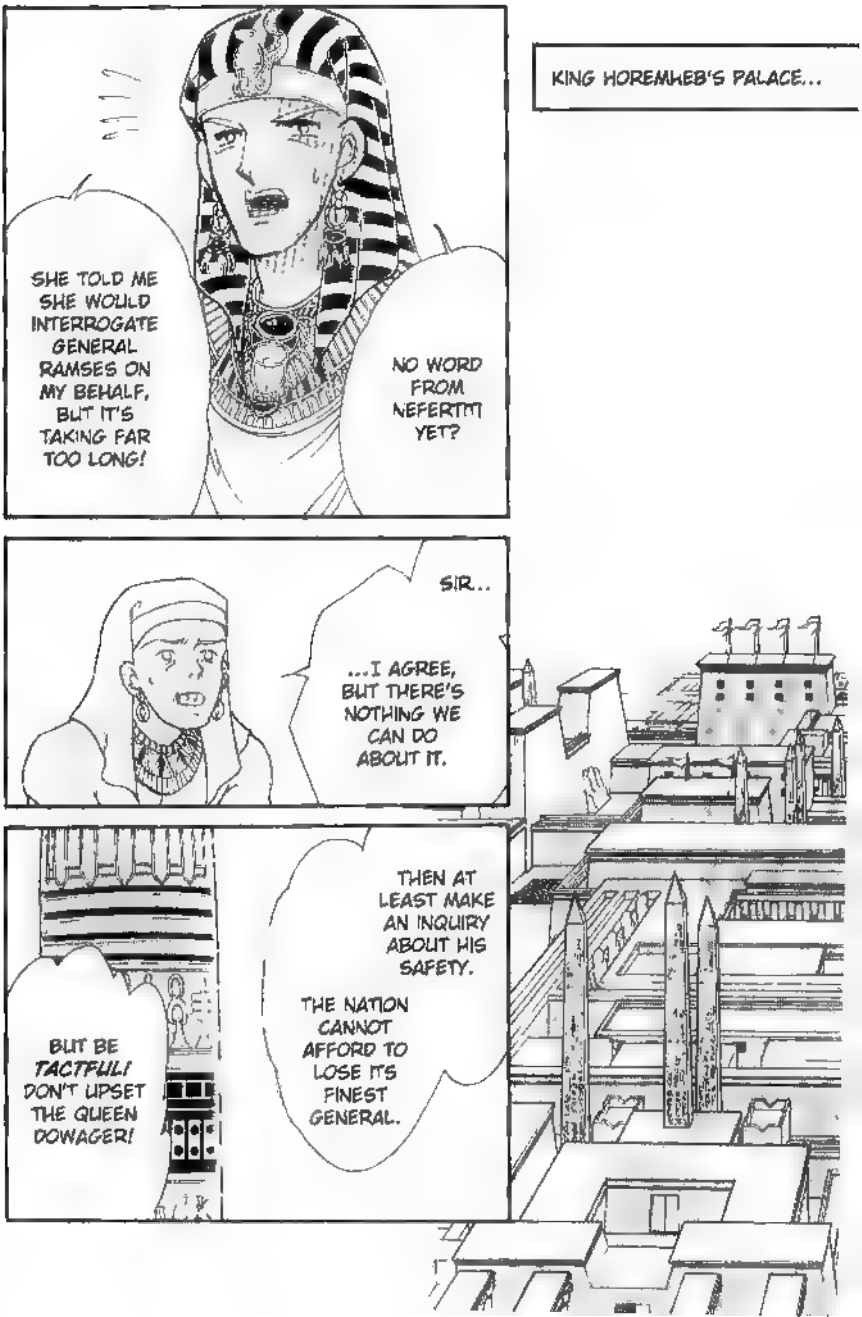
WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?
WE WEREN'T NOTIFIED YOU'D GONE OUT.
OH...DON'T WORRY, I WAS JUST OUT FOR A WALK

NEFERT
..
NEFERT, WAKE UP!
SHAKE
SHAKE
MMM... YU.R...?
WHY'RE YOU UP AT THIS HOUR?
NEFERT, I NEED A FAVOR.
LEND ME ONE OF YOUR FAMILY'S BOATS.
I NEED A FAST ONE, AND THE MEN TO CREW IT
HUH?!

YOU'RE GOING TO THE SOUTH? WHY?
WE'LL BE TRAVELING UPSTREAM, SO THE MEN MUST BE STRONG.
I ALSO NEED CAMELS AND WEAPONS!



THE MORE I KNOW YOU, THE MORE I SEE...
...WHY MY BROTHER FINDS YOU SO CAPTIVATING.
THANKS, NEFERT. I REALLY OWE YOU.
PROCURE THE CAMELS AT YOUR DESTINATION. OUR MEN WILL HELP YOU WITH THAT.
LORD, WHAT A FIRE-BRAND!
NEFERT, LISTEN...
...I WON'T DRAG YOU INTO THIS ANY FURTHER. I'LL DENY ANY CONNECTION WITH THE RAMSES FAMILY, OKAY?
JUST DO ME A FAVOR AND DON'T GET CAUGHT.
I TRUST YOU, YURI.
TO ELEPHANTINE!


KING HOREMHEB'S PALACE...
SHE TOLD ME SHE WOULD INTERROGATE GENERAL RAMSES ON MY BEHALF, BUT IT'S TAKING FAR TOO LONG!
NO WORD FROM NEFERTITI YET?
SIR..
...I AGREE, BUT THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN DO ABOUT IT.
THEN AT LEAST MAKE AN INQUIRY ABOUT HIS SAFETY.
THE NATION CANNOT AFFORD TO LOSE IT'S FINEST GENERAL.
BUT BE *TACTFUL!* DON'T UPSET THE QUEEN DOWAGER!

NEFERTITI'S PALACE...
YOUR HIGH-NESS...
...THERE'S A MESSENGER FROM THE KING'S PALACE.
REALLY?
WELL, JUST IGNORE HIM.
AS I SAID, IGNORE HIM.
BUT HE'S FROM THE KING, YOUR HIGHNESS.
HIS EXCELLENCY WISHES TO KNOW HOW GENERAL RAMSES IS DOING.

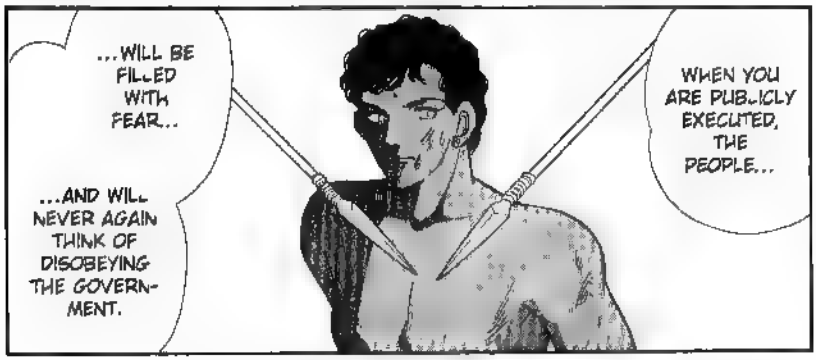
IT WILL BE CONCLUDED THAT HE ESCAPED AND DIED WHILE ON THE RUN.
GENERAL RAMSES WILL SOON BE FOUND DEAD IN THE DESERT.
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF

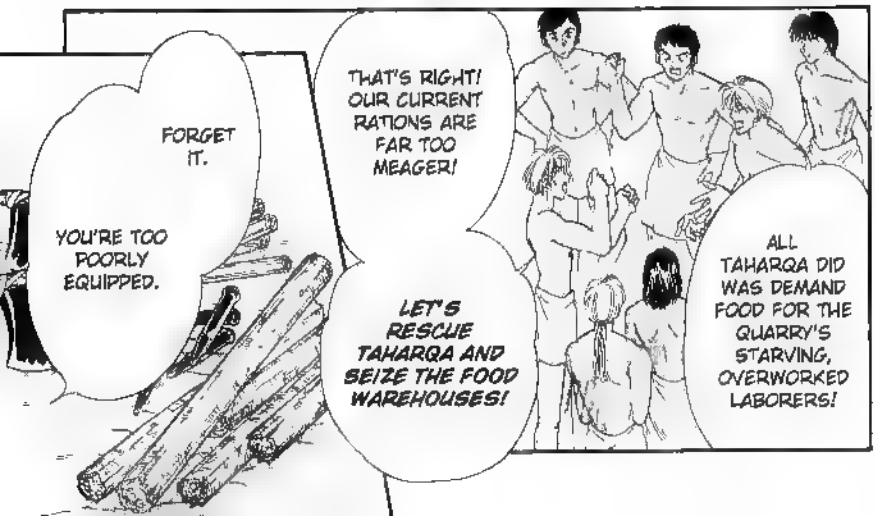
HOW LONG HE SURVIVES DEPENDS ON HIS PHYSICAL CONDITION.
HA HA HA HA HA
HA HA HA
KING HOREMHEB SHOULD BE GRATEFUL THAT I'M...
...DISPOSING OF THIS MAN WHO KEEPS GETTING IN HIS WAY!

ELEPHANTINE (PRESENT DAY ASWAN)...
ELEPHANTINE, THE CAPITAL OF UPPER EGYPT'S FIRST STATE AND THE NATION'S SOUTHERN-MOST STRONGHOLD.
HOWEVER, ITS LAND WAS ILL-SUITED TO FARMING AND THE CITY SUFFERED FROM RECURRING FOOD SHORTAGES.
SINCE ANCIENT TIMES THE CITY PRODUCED GRANITE USED TO BUILD PYRAMIDS AND TEMPLES.
THE LOCALS WERE ENGAGED IN HARSH COMPULSORY LABOR AT THE GRANITE QUARRIES.

GRARRR
RARRRR
SET TAHARQA! FREE!
RELEASE TAHARQA!
MORE FOOD FOR LABORERS!
OR WE'LL ARREST YOU!
THIS IS AN UNLAWFUL ASSEMBLY! DISPERSE!

SEE THAT, TAHARQA?
THE RABBLE ARE POWER-LESS TO HELP YOU.
HA HA HA HA...
STUPID PEONS.


...WILL BE FILLED WITH FEAR...
...AND WILL NEVER AGAIN THINK OF DISOBEYING THE GOVERN-MENT.
WHEN YOU ARE PUBLICLY EXECUTED, THE PEOPLE...


FORGET IT.
YOU'RE TOO POORLY EQUIPPED.
THAT'S RIGHT! OUR CURRENT RATIONS ARE FAR TOO MEAGER!
LET'S RESCUE TAHARQA AND SEIZE THE FOOD WAREHOUSES!
ALL TAHARQA DID WAS DEMAND FOOD FOR THE QUARRY'S STARVING, OVERWORKED LABORERS!

FIRST THINGS FIRST. TAHARQA IS YOUR LEADER, ISN'T HE?
IF YOU WANT TO RESCUE HIM, YOU NEED TO GET YOURSELVES ORGANIZED.
WHAT? WHO ARE YOU?!
GATHER AS MANY MEN AS YOU CAN FIND...
...WHO SHARE YOUR GRIEVANCES.
HUH?!
EXCUSE US!
A FOOD RIOT IS ABOUT TO ERUPT IN A NEARBY VILLAGE!

...
DOES ANYONE KNOW THE DISPOSITION OF GOVERNMENT FORCES IN THIS TOWN?
TELL THEM NOT TO STRIKE OUT YET.
HAVE THEM ASSEMBLE HERE INSTEAD.
WE WILL!
NOW...
...WE'LL SEE HOW MANY WILL COME.

IT'S TOO CRUEL!
DON'T EXECUTE TAHARQA!
DON'T DO IT!
THEY MUST NEVER, EVER MAKE DEMANDS.
LABORERS MUST ONLY OBEY, TAHARQA, NOTHING ELSE.
IGNORE THEM...
THEY'RE JUST A GAGGLE OF GEESE.

FWEEEEET
DO IT!
WHAT WAS THAT?!

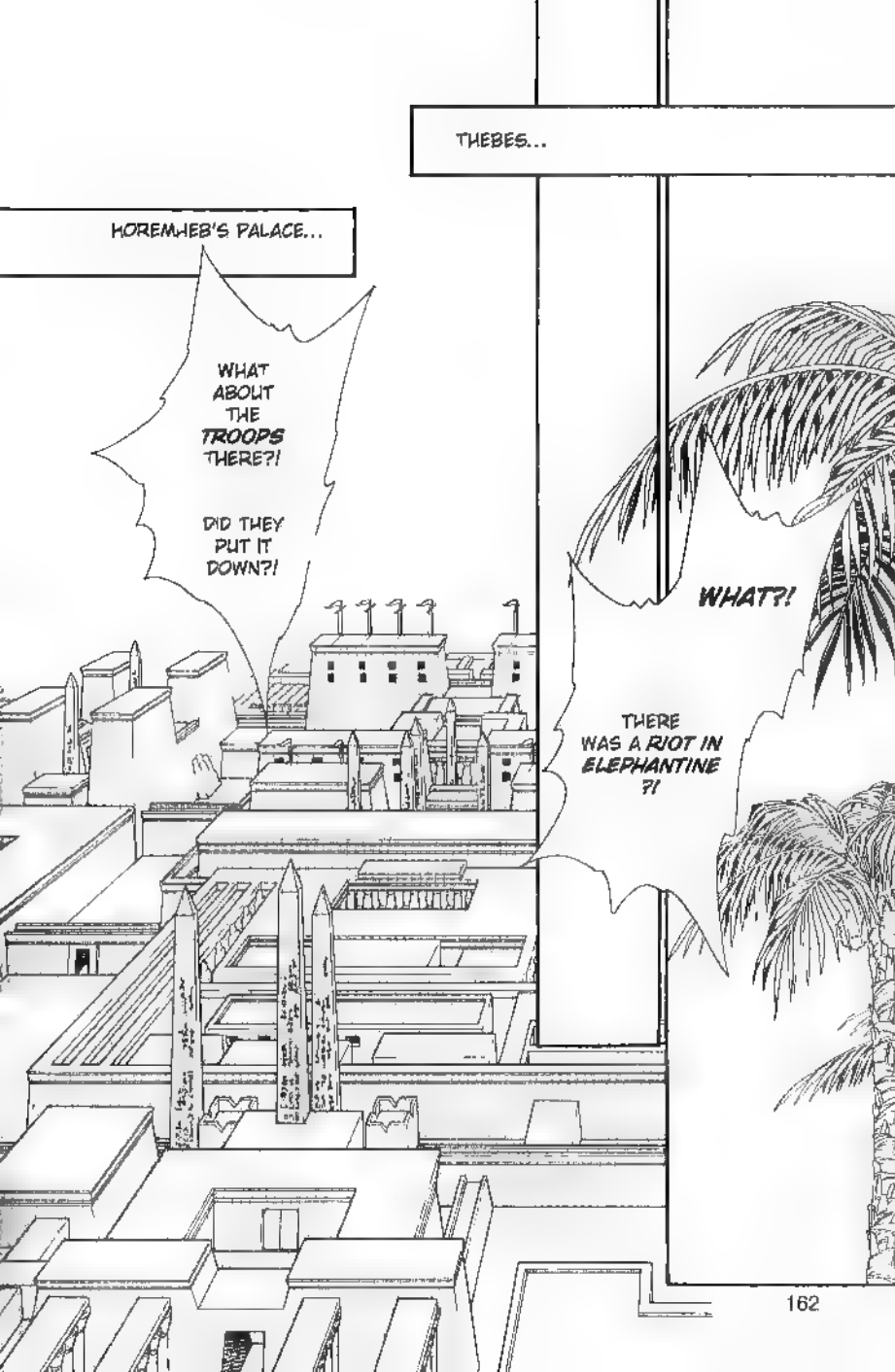
THOOM
HEY, YOU SCUM! STOP!
SHOOM
WUUPP
?!
HUH?!
TA-RUMP
TA-RUMP
TA-RUMP
TA-RUMP

FWEEEET
I DON'T BELIEVE IT!
TRUP
TRUP
TRUP

DON'T LET TAHARQA GET AWAY!
GO AFTER THEM, FOOLS!
HUSH
A PLAN?
CLOP
TRUTH IS, WE'D ALMOST LOST HOPE, BUT THEN...
...SOMEONE CAME UP WITH A PLAN.
CLOP
...WAS AMAZ-INGLY DEFI-ANT, KUNES!
WHAT YOU JUST DID...
YOU OKAY, TAHARQA?
CLOP
KUNES!

THE SIGNAL?
WHO CAME UP WITH THIS PLAN? IT'S LIKE A MILITARY OPERATION!
FWEEEEEET
AH! THERE'S THE SIGNAL TO ASSEMBLE.
I'LL FILL YOU IN LATER.

YOU...
...ORGANIZED MY RESCUE?!
IT WAS NO TROUBLE.
WE CAN'T AFFORD TO LOSE A MAN OF YOUR CAPABILITIES, TAHARQA.
SMILE
?!


THEBES...
HOREMHEB'S PALACE...
WHAT ABOUT THE TROOPS THERE?!
DID THEY PUT IT DOWN?!
WHAT?!
THERE WAS A RIOT IN ELEPHANTINE ?!

THIS CAN'T BE!
ACCORDING TO THE MESSENGER, THE REBELS...
...DROVE OUR TROOPS FROM THE CITY.

A ROYAL GARRISON OF EGYPT TROUNCED BY A MOB OF COMMONERS?!
MY ARMY... DEFEATED BY FARMERS?!

I... I FEAR WE MAY HAVE A FULL-SCALE UPRISING, SIR!
AND THEIR RANKS ARE SWELLING AS THEY ADVANCE THROUGH CITIES SUCH AS KENI AND EDOF.
YES, SIR!
THE REPORT FURTHER STATES THAT THESE COMMONERS ARE NOW MOVING NORTH.

FEH! THAT RABBLE WILL GET *NOTHING!*
FOR FEWER TAXES AND AN END TO COMPULSORY LABOR, SIR.
THIS IS *INTOLERABLE!*
WHY ARE THEY *DOING* THIS?! WHAT ARE THEIR DEMANDS?!
I WOULD, EXCELLENCY...
WE HAVE A SITUATION THAT REQUIRES GENERAL RAMSES. PLEASE RELEASE HIM!
WHY THE FUSS, YOUR EXCELLENCY?
I'M GLAD YOU'RE HERE, YOUR HIGHNESS.

WEREN'T SOME RELUCTANT TO GO TO THE FRONT TO FACE THE HITTITES? ONE OF THOSE SHOULD BE ABLE TO HANDLE THIS.
HAVE YOU NO OTHER GENERALS, EXCELLENCY?
I'M AWARE OF THAT, BUT AN INSURRECTION HAS BURST FROM THE SOUTH AND IS APPROACHING THEBES!
...EXCEPT HE'S STILL ACCUSED OF SUBVERSION.
A WORD ...
...OF ADVICE, EXCELLENCY. AS KING OF EGYPT, YOU'D DO WELL TO REFRAIN...
...FROM PANICKING WHENEVER THERE'S A MINOR DISTURBANCE SOMEWHERE IN THE COUNTRY.
...

HE'LL HAVE TO SUPPRESS THESE MALCONTENTS!
YES, SIR!
HMPH! SUMMON GENERAL DJOSER!
...BUT I'M ONLY STATING FACTS!
EXCUSE ME, SIR...
DON'T EXAGGERATE! THEY'RE JUST A GANG OF LOWLIFES!
REBEL FORCE?
THE REBEL FORCE IS WITHIN SIGHT TO THE SOUTH!
YOUR EXCELLENCY!
WHAT WE SEE ISN'T A MERE GANG, BUT A VERITABLE BATTALION!
AND BY THE LOOKS OF THINGS, THEY'RE WELL ORGANIZED!

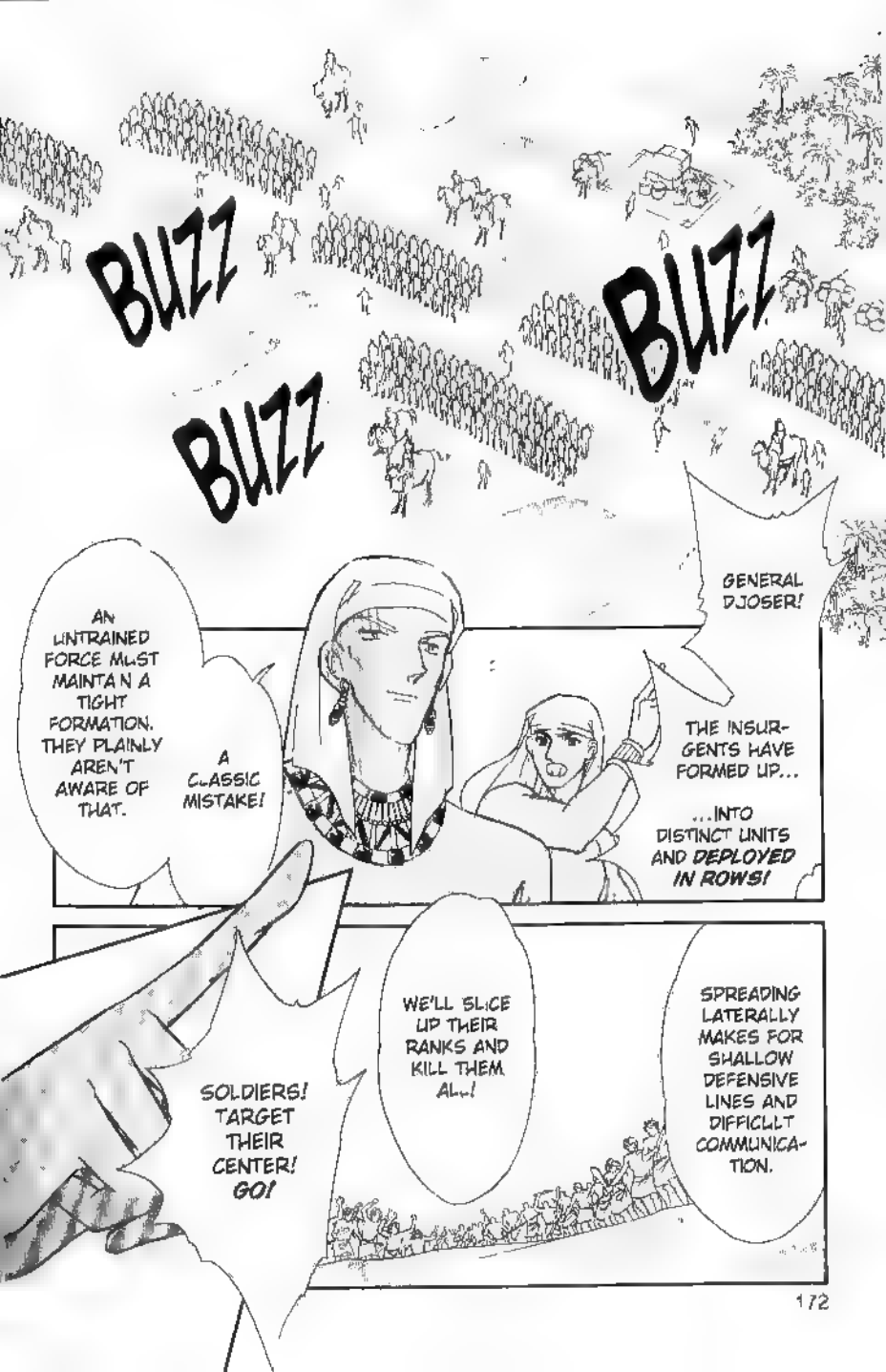
ROOARRRRRRRRAAAAHRRRAAR

PRINCESS YURI...
...WE'VE REACHED THEBES.
GOT HERE IN RECORD TIME, TOO.
EVEN SO...
...I WONDER IF WE'RE TOO LATE.
RAMSES S A STRONG MAN, MA'AM.
I KNOW, BUT...
PRINCESS YURI!

THANKS, TAHARQA.
TA-RUMP
TA-RUMP
THEBES IS SENDING OUT ITS TROOPS!
TA-RUMP
THIS WON'T BE AS EASY AS I'D HOPED.
I SEE...
GENERAL DJOSER, MA'AM!
WHO'S THEIR COMMANDER?
STILL, I'M NOT SURPRISED. NEFERTITI'S LIKE NAKIA. ONCE SHE GETS HER TALONS IN SOMETHING...
...SHE'LL FIGHT THE DEVIL HIMSELF BEFORE SHE'LL LET GO.

THIS A GREAT DAY!
WE'RE READY TO TAKE ON ANYTHING THEBES THROWS AT US!
THE KING'S TROOPS ARE TAKING POSITION!
LISTEN UP, ALL OF YOU!
I WILL LEAD OUR CENTER! RYUI WILL OVERSEE OUR RIGHT FLANK AND SHALA OUR LEFT!
HADI'S UNIT WILL TAKE UP A POSITION TO THE RIGHT OF RYUI'S!
TIMING IS CRUCIAL! AND WE CAN AFFORD NO MISTAKES!

YES, MA'AM!
YES, MA'AM!
YES, MA'AM!
PRIN-CESS YURI!
TAHARQA ?
PLEASE LET ME LEAD THE RIGHTMOST UNIT!
YOU'VE AIDED OUR STRUGGLE AS NO ONE HAS...
...BUT IT'S STILL OUR STRUGGLE!
I ONLY ASK FOR A ROLE THAT BEFITS US!
VERY WELL, HADI'S UNIT IS YOURS.
THANK YOU, PRINCESS YUR!


BUZZ
BUZZ
BUZZ
GENERAL DJOSER!
THE INSURGENTS HAVE FORMED UP...
...INTO DISTINCT UNITS AND DEPLOYED IN ROWS!
A CLASSIC MISTAKE!
AN UNTRAINED FORCE MUST MAINTAIN A TIGHT FORMATION. THEY PLAINLY AREN'T AWARE OF THAT.
SOLDIERS! TARGET THEIR CENTER! GO!
WE'LL SLICE UP THEIR RANKS AND KILL THEM ALL!
SPREADING LATERALLY MAKES FOR SHALLOW DEFENSIVE LINES AND DIFFICULT COMMUNICATION.

HERE THEY COME! ATTACK!
RAAH
ROAR
ROAR
THWAK
THWAK
AH! THEY'VE PUT THEIR FOCUS ON OUR CENTER!
THEY'RE ALL COMING AT US!
AAGH!

TOO MANY OF THEM! WE CAN'T HOLD!
JUST HANG ON!
ROAR
GENERAL DJOSER, THE INSURGENTS ARE PANICKING!
OF COURSE! WE'RE TEARING OUT THEIR HEART!
RAAH
WE CAN'T TAKE MUCH MORE!
THEY'LL KILL US ALL!
ROAR
RAAAHH
RAOR
ROAR

ROAR
ROAR
AH HAH! THEIR CENTER'S COLLAPSING!
AFTER THEM! DON'T LEAVE A SINGLE MAN ALIVE!
CENTER UNIT!
RETREAT! RETREAT!

NEFERTITI'S PALACE...
MM-HMM...
WELL, THAT'S AS I EXPECTED.
DID YOU HEAR THAT, RAMSES?
THE BULK OF THE INSURGENTS ARE NOW IN RETREAT.
THE KING WISHED ME TO RELEASE YOU TO HELP FIGHT THEM.
BUT IT SEEMS YOU'RE NOT ACTUALLY NEEDED.

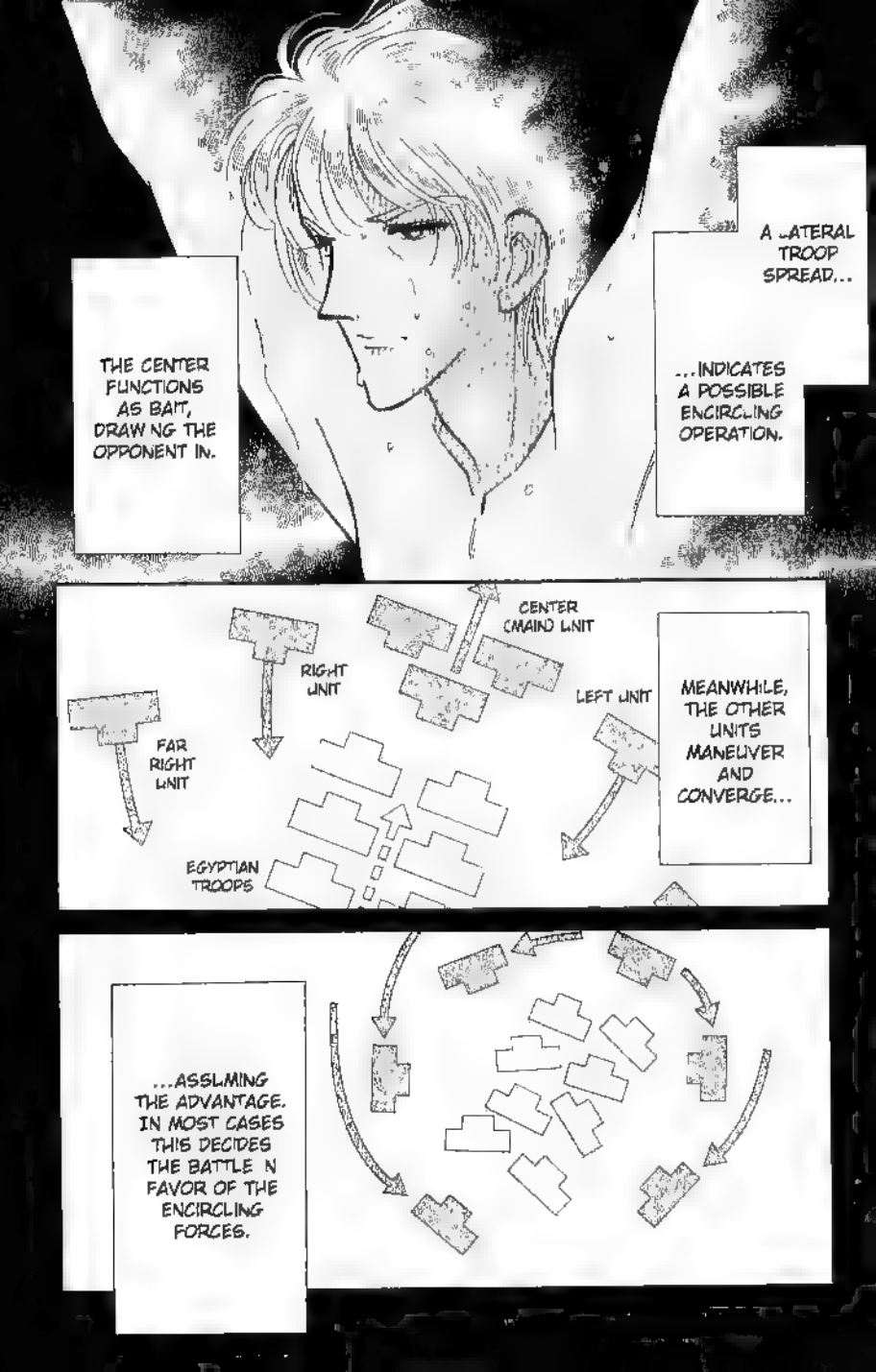
SNORT
YOU FIND IT FUNNY?
IT'S A TRICK.
WHAT?
...INSTEAD OF MAINTAINING A TIGHT FORMATION.
THE REBELS SPREAD OUT...
WELL, THAT'S WHAT'S TO BE EXPECTED FROM BUMPKINS.
THEY BROKE AND RAN AS SOON AS DJOSER'S TROOPS ATTACKED THEIR CENTER.

YOUR HIGH-NESS...
YOU'RE SAYING THE REBELS ARE TRYING TO FOOL DJOSER?
DO YOU REALLY THINK SIMPLE FARMERS ARE CAPABLE OF THAT?
YOU SAY THE REBEL CENTER RETREATED?
LET'S AWAIT FURTHER NEWS.
IN THAT CASE, DJOSER'S NOT THE HORSE I'D BET ON.
WHOEVER'S LEADING THE REBELS WAS ABLE TO BRING THEM OUT OF THE SOUTH AND ALL THE WAY TO THEBES.
ONLY A BLITHER-ING IDIOT WOULD UNDERES-TIMATE SUCH A PERSON.

SLICE THOSE REBELS UP!
GO!
AAGH!
THWUNK
?!
THWUNK
SIR! INSURGENTS BEHIND US!
ARGH!
ROAR
RAAH
RAAH

RAAH
RAAH
ROAR
GEN... GENERAL DJOSER!
WHAT ?!
WE APPEAR TO BE SURROUNDED!
RAAH
ROAR
...AND BEARING DOWN FROM THE REAR!
THEY'RE ON BOTH FLANKS, SIR..

THEY'RE HEMMED IN, PRINCESS YURI!
WELL DONE, HADI!
CLOSE IN ON ALL SIDES AND CAPTURE GENERAL DJOSER!
KILL ONLY IF YOU HAVE TO! OUR QUARREL'S WITH THE ROYALS, NOT THE ARMY!
SOME OF THE SOLDIERS MAY EVEN BE OF A MIND TO JOIN US!
ROAR
ROAR
ROAR
HAH


A LATERAL TROOP SPREAD...
...INDICATES A POSSIBLE ENCIRCLING OPERATION.
THE CENTER FUNCTIONS AS BAIT, DRAWING THE OPPONENT IN.
CENTER (MAIN) UNIT
RIGHT UNIT
LEFT UNIT
FAR RIGHT UNIT
EGYPTIAN TROOPS
MEANWHILE, THE OTHER UNITS MANEUVER AND CONVERGE...
...ASSUMING THE ADVANTAGE. IN MOST CASES THIS DECIDES THE BATTLE IN FAVOR OF THE ENCIRCLING FORCES.

STILL, IT TAKES AN EXCELLENT TACTICIAN TO SET IT UP AND PULL IT OFF.
HOW DID THESE REBELS FIND SUCH A PERSON IN THE COUNTRY-SIDE...
COULD IT BE...?!

RAMSES' VILLA IN THEBES...
OH MY...
THE REBELS OVER-POWERED THE KING'S TROOPS?
YES. THE BATTLE TOOK PLACE JUST SOUTH OF THEBES.
IT WAS, BY ALL I HEAR, A HUMILI-ATING DEFEAT.
GASP
HUSH!
THINGS IN EGYPT TODAY ARE REALLY...
I DON'T BLAME THEM, FRANKLY.
IT'S ALSO BEEN REPORTED THAT MORE THAN A FEW JOINED THE REBELS.
...WHILE MANY OF THE SOLDIERS SIMPLY FLED THE BATTLE.
I HEAR GENERAL DJOSER AND SEVERAL OF HIS OFFICERS WERE CAPTURED...

I JUST WALKED IN. THERE WERE NO GUARDS AT THE DOOR.
IS THAT WISE?
OH! PRINCESS YURI!
PRINCESS YURI!
WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN? I WAS SO WORRIED ABOUT YOU!
...NEFERT...
I'M SORRY, MA'AM...

I KNOW, BUT IT'S NOT SAFE TO BE ON THE STREETS RIGHT NOW.
AN ARMY OF REBELS APPEARS READY TO ATTACK THEBES.
I'VE BEEN TRYING TO FIND A WAY TO HELP RAMSES, BUT IT'S BEEN HARD GOING.
...THAT I WAS GONE SO LONG.
...
AWFUL!
CLUTCH
EEK!
OH, NO! THAT'S TERRIBLE!
YOU'D THINK SO...
...BUT SO FAR THEY HAVEN'T.
NO DOUBT THEY'LL SET RAMSES FREE SO HE CAN DEFEND THE CAPITAL!
BUT SURELY THE ROYAL FAMILY WON'T STAND FOR IT!

PRIN-
CESS
YURI....
WHAT
DO WE
DO
NOW?
OH...
HE'S STILL
AT THE
QUEEN
DOWAGER'S
PALACE?
EXCUSE
ME,
PRINCESS
YURI.
...
OH,
CER-
TAINLY.
MAY I
SEE YOU
FOR A
MOMENT,
MA'AM?
...

ALL RIGHT...
NEFERTITI'S SHOWN HER STRIPES. IT'S PLAIN SHE HOLDS HERSELF ABOVE THE FORTUNES OF EGYPT.
...EVEN IF IT MEANS LETTING REBELS TAKE THEBES.
SHE'LL SEE RAMSES DIE FOR DARING TO OPPOSE HER...

NOTHING WILL SWAY HER..
...OR SO SHE BELIEVES! I GUESS WE'LL JUST HAVE TO SEE ABOUT THAT.